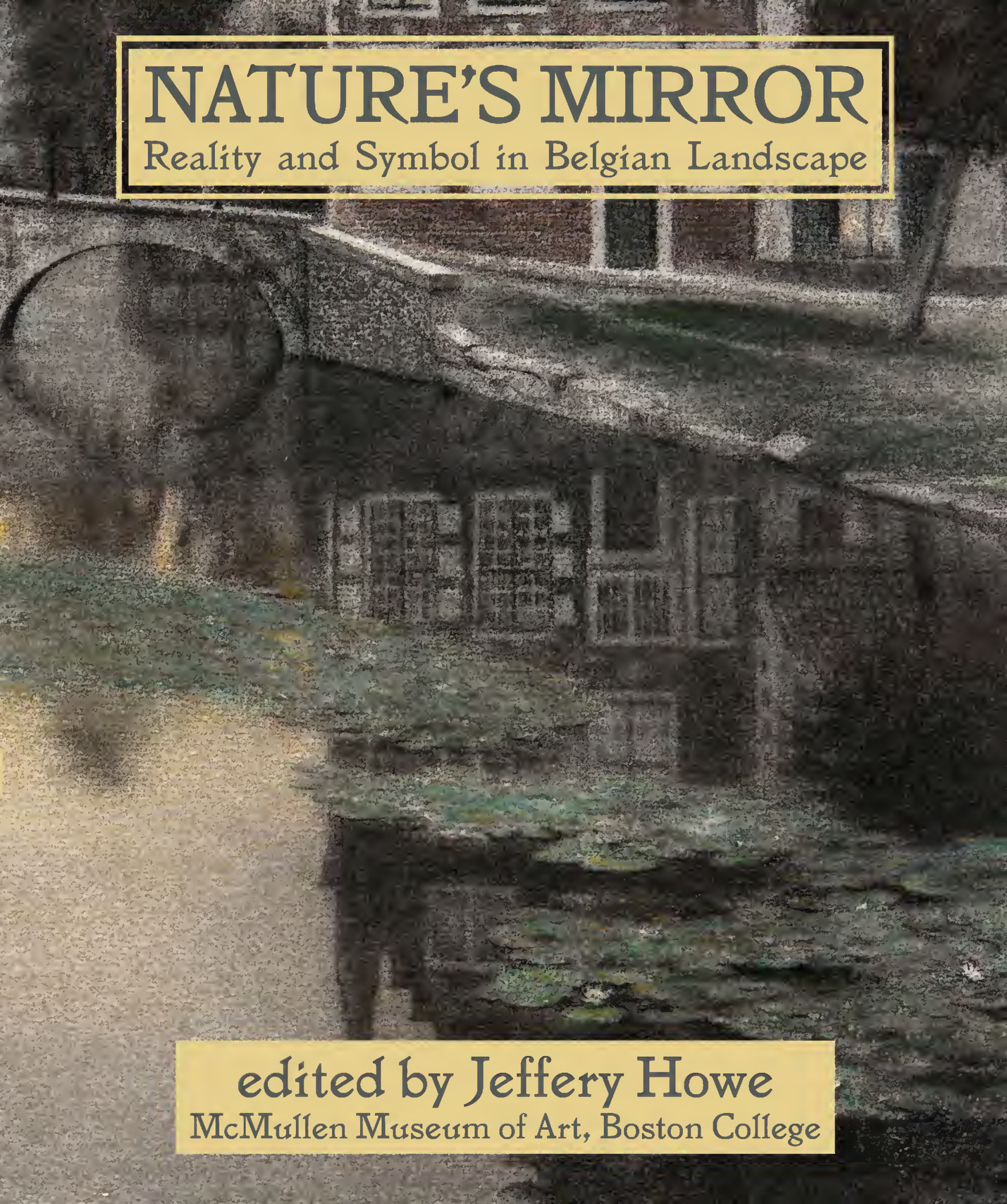

# NATURE'S MIRROR

## Reality and Symbol in Belgian Landscape

edited by Jeffery Howe
McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College

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This publication is issued in conjunction with the exhibition *Nature's Mirror: Reality and Symbol in Belgian Landscape* in the Daley Family Gallery at the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, September 10–December 10, 2017. Organized by the McMullen Museum, *Nature's Mirror* has been curated by Jeffery Howe and underwritten by Boston College with major support from the Patrons of the McMullen Museum and Mary Ann and Vincent Q. Giffuni.

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For Charles Hack
Founder of the Hearn Family Trust

# PREFACE

The idea for the exhibition *Nature's Mirror* arose from Jeffery Howe's lifelong study of Belgian symbolist art, which began with his dissertation and subsequent book in 1982 on one of the movement's most celebrated and mysterious artists, Fernand Khnopff. Throughout his distinguished career as a scholar and professor of art history at Boston College, Howe maintained a close relationship with an inspired, knowledgeable, and gifted collector in the field, Charles Hack, who over the past forty years has built the premier assemblage of Belgian art in North America for the Hearn Family Trust. Charles Hack and Angella Hearn share a deep interest in Belgian art. In anticipation of his retirement from teaching in 2018, Howe proposed curating one more exhibition in his area of expertise, drawing principally on works in the unparalleled and, by now, extensive Hearn Trust collection. Hack generously agreed and the two set about reviewing the Hearn holdings to define a focus for the exhibition and a plan for the research to be presented by various scholars in this accompanying publication. At first, they proposed an examination of the symbolist landscape, but, as they dug deeper, they realized the collection had a larger story to tell about how and why landscape developed from the late Middle Ages to the early twentieth century in Belgium as a significant artistic genre. As research progressed, Howe identified works of art to be requested from museums and other private collections to realize the exhibition's narrative.

Thus, it is to Jeffery Howe, an outstanding collaborator and colleague, that the McMullen owes its greatest debt of gratitude. He has approached this exhibition of broad chronological range with characteristic insight and enthusiasm to ask new questions and generate new knowledge. With no less appreciation the Museum extends thanks to Charles Hack for his contributions to the discovery process and for making the fruits of his research in assembling the collection over a lifetime available for study. We would also like to express appreciation to other lenders to the exhibition and those who aided with research and conservation: Jean and Howard LeVaux, Sura Levine, Paul Solman and Jan Freeman, Rachel Solman Viola, Ron Yourkowski, and other private lenders; Christian Dupont, Amy Braitsch, and Barbara Hebard (John J. Burns Library, Boston College); Daniel H. Weiss, Lisa Cain, Emily Foss, and Yana van Dyke (Metropolitan Museum of Art); John W. Smith, Tara Emsley, and Maureen O'Brien (Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design).

Special thanks are also due to Howe for editing this volume and to the Belgian and American scholars, who in addition to Howe, contributed essays from their research to this volume: Anne Adriaens-Pannier, Albert Alhadeff, Alison Hokanson, Catherine Labio, and Dominique Marechal. At the McMullen Museum, Assistant Director Diana Larsen has designed the Daley Family Gallery to provide intimate spaces for viewing the various phases in which the exhibition's narrative unfolds. Assistant Director John McCoy designed this book and the exhibition's graphics to resonate with those popular among Belgian book designers of the symbolist period. Manager of Publications and Exhibitions Kate Shugert organized loans and copyedited this volume

with exceptional care and judgment. With creativity, intelligence, and efficiency Rachel Chamberlain, Manager of Education, Outreach, and Digital Resources, has organized a wealth of public programs to engage audiences of all ages in dialogue with the exhibition. Other colleagues at Boston College also provided invaluable assistance: Christopher Soldt photographed with great skill many works in this catalogue, Anastos Chiavaras and Rose Breen from the Risk Management Office offered guidance regarding insurance, and the Office of University Advancement assisted with funding. We remain grateful for the following endowed funds that provide crucial support for all our projects: Linda '64 and Adam Crescenzi Fund, Janet M. and C. Michael Daley '58 Fund, Gerard and Jane Gaughan Fund for Exhibitions, Hecksher Family Fund, Hightower Family Fund, John F. McCarthy and Gail M. Bayer Fund, Christopher J. Toomey '78 Fund, and Alison S. and William M. Vareika '74, P'09, '15 Fund.

The McMullen Museum could not have undertaken this project but for the continued generosity of the administration of Boston College and the McMullen family. We especially thank Jacqueline McMullen, President William P. Leahy, SJ; Provost and Dean of Faculties David Quigley; Vice Provost for Faculties Billy Soo; Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences Dean Gregory Kalscheur, SJ; and Director of the Institute for Liberal Arts Mary Crane. This publication has been supported in part by a fund in memory of a beloved docent, Peggy Simons. Major support for the exhibition was provided by the Patrons of the McMullen Museum, chaired by C. Michael Daley, and Mary Ann and Vincent Q. Giffuni.

Finally, we reiterate our appreciation to Charles Hack to whom we dedicate this book, and without whose vision for collecting and dedication to bringing the finest collection of Belgian art to American shores this investigation would not have been possible.

Nancy Netzer, Director and Professor of Art History

# HISTORICAL OUTLINE AND MAP
## Jeffery Howe

| | |
|---|---|
| 1302 | The Battle of the Golden Spurs, Kortrijk (Courtrai). In this critical battle, French aristocratic knights were defeated by Flemish foot soldiers. Flanders remained independent of France, and an increase in the rights of the guilds and middle classes followed. |
| 1348–49 | The Black Death. The bubonic plague and other plagues recurred several times in the fourteenth century. Estimates suggest that Flanders lost one-sixth to one-quarter of its population in 1349. |
| 1384 | Flanders and Burgundy were united by Duke Philip the Bold. |
| 1384–1482 | The Burgundian period. |
| 1430 | Duke Philip the Good (r. 1419–67) united Brabant with his other territories. |
| 1467–77 | Charles the Bold ruled; after his death, his daughter Mary inherited the throne. When she married Maximilian I of Austria, Belgium fell under Habsburg control. |
| 1482–1555 | The Netherlands were under the control of Holy Roman Emperors. Maximilian I of Austria was the first Habsburg ruler of Belgium; he was succeeded by Charles V, king of Spain, another Habsburg. |
| 1555–85 | Revolt of the Netherlands. Philip II of Spain ruled the region; his reign was characterized by violent repression of Reformation Protestants and independent cities. Pieter Bruegel reflected this violence in *The Massacre of the Innocents*. |
| 1558–67 | Revolt against Spanish rule; Protestant Holland became a separate republic, while the area that will become Belgium remains under Spanish control. |
| 1568–73 | The Duke of Alva was sent to crush the rebellion, causing great suffering in Brussels, Ghent, and Antwerp. |
| 1579–1713 | Spanish Netherlands. During this period, Belgium was Catholic, relatively peaceful, and largely independent. Peter Paul Rubens was the major artistic figure in this era. The Northern Netherlands became a separate, Protestant country. |
| 1713–94 | Era of Austrian rule. |
| 1794–1814 | French rule; consequence of the French Revolution and Napoleonic era. |
| 1815–30 | The United Kingdom of the Netherlands; after the fall of Napoleon, Belgium was united with the Netherlands to keep it from French, German, and English control. |
| 1830 | Revolt against the Dutch, leading to Belgian independence. Cultural and religious differences separated the Dutch and Belgians; revolution broke out in 1830 and independence was declared. Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, a German prince and an uncle of Britain's Queen Victoria, became King Leopold I in 1831. |
| 1870 | Franco-Prussian War; Belgian neutrality was respected. |

1886 Widespread labor strikes.

1914–18 World War I; Belgium was the first country to be invaded in August 1914. Only a small sliver of the country remained unoccupied until the end of the war.

1939–45 World War II; Belgium was occupied between May 1940 and September 1944.

# NATURE'S MIRROR: REALITY AND SYMBOL IN BELGIAN LANDSCAPE

Jeffery Howe

*Nature's Mirror: Reality and Symbol in Belgian Landscape* evokes a variety of shifting identities. Questions immediately arise—what constitutes a Belgian? Why did landscape emerge as a major genre of art in this region? As we explore the art of this exhibition, the metaphor of a mirror comes up again and again, as a reflection of an external reality and as an index of self-consciousness.

## THE SHIFTING CONSTRUCTS OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL IDENTITY

Our senses of nature and national identity are based on external facts, but are also constructions of our personal and cultural experience.[1] There is a long history of artists working in the region now known as Belgium, and their depictions of the external world reflect some of the most important developments in the history of art. For the purposes of this exhibition, we have chosen artists who lived and worked primarily in the region now known as Belgium or the southern Netherlands. The chronological limits of the works included begin with the fifteenth century and end just after the First World War. Our focus is on the creation and development of landscape as an independent art form, and its cultural significance throughout the early modern era.

Belgium's current national status dates back to only 1830, but the regions of Flanders and Wallonia have a much longer history.[2] The confluence of linguistic and cultural traditions has been seen as a major factor in the artistic and economic vitality of the region, most notably by Edmond Picard in an important essay in 1897, "L'âme belge."[3] Picard observed the hybrid character of the Belgians, at a crossroads between north and south: "A German in Belgium considers himself to be in some vague southern region, *en route* to Provence; a Frenchman believes himself to be somewhere in the North, near the latitude of Scandinavia."[4] To outsiders, a certain indeterminacy is inherent in Belgian identity.

Although the political entities have frequently changed, the artistic tradition has been much more continuous. In 1899, the historian Henri Pirenne asserted that modern Belgium was a continuation of the ancient Netherlands, rejecting the popular criticism that Belgium was merely an artificial creation born of political expedience.[5] The Belgian art historian Max Rooses noted the unifying role of art in 1914: "Belgium is a geographical expression which in the course of the centuries has often changed its meaning. It is more to its art than to anything else that this country owes its real moral homogeneity."[6] The visual arts are sometimes expected to transcend linguistic and political barriers. In actuality, however, the interpretation of these works has often been shaped by political concerns and other external factors as well. The concept of national identity was profoundly changed by the rise of nation states in the nineteenth century, and it is problematic to project backward the concept of such national identity onto earlier eras when regional and city affiliations were much more important.[7]

Given these historical ambiguities and continuing social tensions, even the decision to call the art of the southern Lowlands "Flemish" or "Netherlandish" is problematic in art historical discourse.[8] The art historian

Wessel Krul has traced the conflicting interpretations of early Northern art as essentially realistic or symbolic, or as reflective of a new national identity in the writings of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians.[9] The issue of who owns the past is often highly contentious. Catherine Labio is one who has pondered these issues; her *Belgian Memories*[10] is a rich collection of essays on the theme of national identity.

## THE MIRROR OF NATURE

The comparison of art and mirrors has a very long history.[11] In *The Republic*, Plato argues that the artist is but an imitator of appearances; he uses the metaphor of a mirror held up to nature to criticize the arts.[12] Later artists and philosophers, however, recognized the positive potential of representations.[13] William Shakespeare famously praised the arts for this very power of representation, with Hamlet urging that actors should keep their mimicry within the bounds of realism to make a convincing moral argument, "to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature."[14]

The sense of sight is one of the main tools by which we understand and navigate the world around us. Vision is a complex process, simultaneously focusing on the external world and our position in it.[15] The great achievement of Renaissance perspective was to acknowledge the central role of the viewer's standpoint to formulate a system that could replicate that point of view for others, making the image of space coherent and measurable. A spatial system that reliably simulated distance and relative positions in space made the portrayal of architecture and landscape both practical and desirable. This is still a requirement for 3-D technologies and virtual reality. The portrayal of nature is intimately linked to the development of optical technologies, including mirrors. Indeed, Filarete (Antonio di Pietro Averlino, 1400–69) explained that it was by using a mirror that Filippo Brunelleschi invented the system of one-point perspective in 1425 in Florence.[16] Optical devices, including the camera obscura, the forerunner of modern photography, have been linked to artists from Jan van Eyck to Johannes Vermeer.[17] Mirrors and landscape are thus connected from the beginning in the quest for realistic representation of this external reality.

Despite its association with objectivity, however, one intrinsic quality of a mirror is that it reflects the gaze of those who are looking at it. What we see is determined by what we bring to the mirror. The essential subjectivity of vision is paradoxically inscribed in the very object most identified with realism. Erwin Panofsky wrote that the result of Renaissance perspective was "a translation of psychophysiological space into mathematical space; in other words, an objectification of the subjective."[18] This formulation precisely echoes that of the French symbolist writer Gustave Kahn, who wrote that the goal of art is to "objectify the subjective."[19] This defined the agenda for many artists in the late nineteenth century, as we will see.

Representations of nature showed the power of imagination, memory, and artistic creativity. These representations had a stimulating and beneficial impact on the viewer. In the fifteenth century, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72) stressed the healing power of landscape images in his *Ten Books on Architecture*: "Our minds are cheered beyond measure by the sight of paintings depicting the delightful countryside, harbours, fishing, hunting, swimming, the games of shepherds—flowers and verdure." Anticipating recent discoveries in medicine and evolutionary biology, in which studies have shown that patients heal faster with a view of landscape, especially trees,[20] Alberti continued:

> Those who suffer from fever are offered much relief by the sight of painted fountains, rivers and running brooks, a fact which anyone can put to the test; for if by chance he lies in bed one night unable to sleep, he need only turn his imagination on limpid waters and fountains which he had seen at one time or another, or perhaps some lake, and his dry feeling will disappear all at once and sleep will come upon him as the sweetest of slumbers.[21]

Leonardo da Vinci also praised the artist for the power to represent any kind of landscape they could imagine:

> If he wishes to bring forth sites or deserts, cool and shady places in times of heat or warm spots when it is cold, he fashions them. So if he desires valleys or wishes to discover vast tracts of land from mountain peaks and look at the sea on the distant horizon beyond them, it is in his power; and so if he wants to look up to the high mountains from low valleys or from high mountains

> towards the deep valleys and the coastline. In fact, whatever exists in the universe either potentially or actually or in the imagination, he has it first in his mind and then in his hands.[22]

Northern artists were widely recognized for their skill in realistic representation, even if this was sometimes disparaged. Michelangelo was famously dismissive of their achievements, insisting that these artists lacked imagination and design.[23] This critical opinion was shared by the Antwerp writer Domenicus Lampsonius, who wrote in 1572 that "Northerners are famous for their good landscape painting because they have their brains in their hands, while Italians, who have them in their heads, paint mythologies and histories."[24] Italian art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries became the standard for academic art, and was characterized by realism, but realism filtered through idealism. This search for perfection was taken to be the highest standard for art, and reflective of a new intellectual and individualistic tradition, by writers on Italian art from Giorgio Vasari to Jacob Burckhardt.[25]

This idealistic standard undervalues the intellectual effort needed to create a convincing landscape; the process of representation is much more complex than simply transcribing what one sees. The emphasis on literary or historical subjects obscures the power of landscape to create an emotional or even spiritual impact. Creating a realistic landscape requires a dynamic dialogue between the artist's vision, the artistic medium, and the viewer's interpretation. Ernst H. Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* stressed that the artist's vision requires transposition to the chosen medium, whether it be drawing or painting, and the subsequent decoding by the viewer.[26] Choices made by the artist in the selection of scenes and technique are shaped by personal experience and memories; likewise the viewer's reaction is similarly subjective. There is a fundamental time element as well. Although we may seem to be able to experience a landscape with a single glance, the artist most likely painted it over a long period, with changing weather and shifting states of mind. Furthermore, the viewer may find that the picture looks different each time it is seen. John Constable noted this when he distinguished between a sketch, which captured the emotion of a moment, and a finished painting, from which one could "drink again and again."[27] The finished picture distills many fleeting impressions and thoughts and presents them for contemplation. Nevertheless, the unpolished sketch also has its own appeal; a sense of spontaneity and authenticity that was recognized in the Baroque era and highly prized by romantic and impressionist artists in the nineteenth century.

The interplay between vision, interpretation, and memory, and between landscape and nature has been compared to a hieroglyph by writers such as Charles Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe, and Emile Verhaeren.[28] The German artist Adrian Ludwig Richter stated in the nineteenth century that nature is a "living hieroglyph of God's laws and sacred intentions."[29]

The history of interpretation of hieroglyphs, of course, was notoriously inaccurate for centuries before they were decoded in the early nineteenth century.[30] Similarly, "landscape" is a perfect example of semiotic ambiguity. One has to take into account the artist's actual view of nature itself, the material form of the work of art that represents that external reality, and the response in the viewer's mind. At each point there are complex subjective factors in this deceptively straightforward construction. What seems to be a natural scene may in fact be created by human activity. In any case, the viewpoint is selected by the artist.[31] The constructed landscape was an important factor not just in Holland; much of Flanders was also created by made land—most notably the polders that reclaimed land from the sea.[32] There is really very little of Belgium that has not been shaped by humans.

Besides the artist's choices, the viewer's response is influenced by their mood, health, economics, and past experiences. It is a highly dynamic relationship rather than a fixed one. In *Landscape and Power*, W. J. T. Mitchell notes that "this indeterminacy of affect seems, in fact, to be a crucial feature of whatever force landscape can have."[33]

## THE INVENTION OF LANDSCAPE AS AN INDEPENDENT GENRE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Art in Belgium and the Lowlands is known for two things: realism and symbolism. Panofsky famously wrote of Jan van Eyck's scrupulous realism that it was as if he painted with a magnifying glass and a telescope.[34] Yet Van Eyck is also known for his densely symbolic images. Sixteenth-century artists such as Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel painted imaginative hellscapes and allegories combining astounding visual imagination and stunningly convincing realism.

1. Pieter Bruegel, *Harvesters*, 1565. Oil on wood panel, 119 x 162 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 19.164.

2. Peter-Paul Rubens (1577–1604), *An Autumn Landscape with a View of Het Steen in the Early Morning*, 1636. Oil on oak panel, 131.2 x 229.2 cm, National Gallery, London, NG66.

Landscape had long been a part of art in the North as well as in Italy, as a matter of background imagery or serving as calendar pages. To cite only one example, a manuscript illumination of *Christ Crucified between the Virgin and St. John* by an anonymous artist in the Circle of the Master of the Troyes Missal (c. 1460, plate 1) is quite sophisticated in its rendering of the landscape setting. This work was produced during the era of Burgundian rule of Flanders, and was thought to be a product of Bruges. Recent scholarship has suggested an origin in Burgundy itself, in Troyes.[35]

Paintings and prints devoted to landscape for its own sake, however, were part of a new artistic development that emerged in Flanders in the sixteenth century. As Gombrich observed: "Yet of all the 'genres' which the sixteenth-century 'specialists' began to cultivate in the North, landscape painting is clearly the most revolutionary."[36]

Flemish artists have long been credited with this innovation, as the quote attributed to Michelangelo cited earlier indicates. In the mid-seventeenth century, the English writer Edward Norgate related an anecdote on the origin of landscape art, and how it brought to life what had been just a verbal description.[37] The invention of landscape as an independent genre is often credited to Joachim Patinir (1480 Dinant–Antwerp 1524). Albrecht Dürer met Patinir in Antwerp and described him as "der gute landschaft maler" (the good landscape painter)—the first use of the term in German.[38] Patinir's paintings feature religious themes with the landscape taking an ever larger role, with the figures becoming quite small in relation to the overall work.

Artists such as Pieter Bruegel still sometimes used landscape as the backdrop to a figural scene, as in his *Allegory of Prudence* (1559–60, plate 4), but his seasonal pictures such as *Summer* (1568, plate 6) emphasize both the landscape and the workers in the fields. This print relates to Bruegel's earlier oil painting of *Harvesters*, which similarly shows a completely secular scene of agricultural laborers (fig. 1). The painting and print are notable for their quotidian realism, and sweeping vistas.

Pieter Bruegel lived during tumultuous and innovative times. He was born in Breda in about 1525, and died in Brussels in 1569. His art was often densely symbolic, but also extremely realistic. His landscapes introduced a new standard of realism for a market now eager for depictions of everyday life in familiar settings.

This tradition of expansive landscapes was extended by Peter-Paul Rubens in the seventeenth century.[39] His 1636 *An Autumn Landscape with a View of Het Steen in the Early Morning* shows his country house at Elewijt near Mechelen (Malines) on the edge of a vast landscape, the kind of deep space that typifies the Baroque (fig. 2).[40] This is a private landscape, one almost certainly painted simply for the artist's pleasure in capturing his surroundings.

The art historian Larry Silver has thoughtfully examined the significance of the rise of landscape and genre painting in Northern art. He notes that viewers not only measure and evaluate landscape scenes when they

look at them, but also measure themselves in comparison. This reflexive relationship of viewer and landscape, or nature's mirror, stresses the communicative role of art. Silver concludes: "we can truly see these developments of the art market in sixteenth-century Flanders to be the epicenter of an emerging 'early modern' visual culture."[41]

The sixteenth century saw the rise of printmaking as a new industry, based on the reproductive technology that made art for more of a mass market possible.[42] In this technical revolution, Antwerp was a world center.[43] Antwerp was also the center of the emerging art trade, a business based on market forces. Art was now produced on speculation in hopes of sale to individual buyers, rather than in response to specific commissions.[44] Many artists became specialists in order to establish a "brand name" in the market. The choice of subjects was influenced by the rise of humanism and the taste for classical learning. Increased travel and global discoveries led to the growing market for maps and paintings, and prints and drawings of the wider world that satisfied a thirst for travel, even if only the armchair variety. Some of these works reflected new discoveries in science, and were themselves models of natural observation.[45]

3. Posthumous portrait of Hieronymus Cock, engraving inscribed IH.W., attributed to Johannes Wierix, from Domenicus Lampsonius, *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae Inferioris effigies* (Antwerp: Apud Viduam Hieronymi Cock, 1572), 26.

The new industry of printmaking changed the conditions of art making. As Silver pointedly observes, we now have to take into account not only the original designer who may have created a painting or a drawing, but the skilled engraver and the publisher of the work. Some individuals such as Hieronymus Cock occasionally combined two or three of these roles, but others remained specialized (fig. 3). How we interpret this early modern visual culture is a fascinating question. Silver explains the conflict between traditionalists who stress the role of original masters whose unique works define the canon of art history, and poststructuralists who stress the role of collaboration and social structures in the production of works of art.[46] In this latter interpretation, a brilliant print is compared to the collaborative nature of a film, which credits many specialized technicians as well as the director.

A parallel development emphasizing artistic identity and copyright emerged at the same time.[47] Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) was a leader in asserting his intellectual property rights. In 1511, he warned unscrupulous copyists: "Beware, you envious thieves of the work and invention of others, keep your thoughtless hands from these works of ours. We have received a privilege from the famous emperor of Rome, Maximilian, that no one shall dare to print these works in spurious forms, nor sell such prints within the boundaries of the empire."[48] Dürer's famous monogram can be seen in this print of *The Nativity*, engraved on a plaque hanging from the top of the decrepit half-timbered house, as an attempt to mark his prints as genuine (plate 2). Although Dürer was not Belgian, his trip to the Lowlands in 1520–21 was a significant event for both him and local artists.[49] It was at this time that he befriended Patinir, and attended his second wedding. Dürer's visit was commemorated in 1855 by a history painting by Henri (Hendrik) Leys, *Albrecht Dürer Visiting Antwerp in 1520* (Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp).

Like Dürer, Augustin Hirschvogel (1503–53) was born in Nuremberg, and was influenced by Dürer. His etching of a *River Landscape with Wooden Bridge* of c. 1546 shows a deep landscape vista with a winding wooden bridge connecting two parts of a village (plate 3). The Northern setting is confirmed by the half-timber houses and pollarded willows on the river banks. Hirschvogel's monogram is inscribed on a plaque hanging from a tree, reminiscent of Dürer's practice.

## THE STORY OF ICARUS—LANDSCAPES OF MYTH AND FAITH

When one looks at a landscape, one can imagine oneself moving through it, even if it is through the sky. This is the dream of flight, and the fate of Icarus is an ancient parable of the dangers of hubris, and thus an allegory of prudence.[50] It is a cautionary tale of technological and artistic limitations. The story of Icarus is taken from *The*

4. Pieter Bruegel, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, c. 1560s. Oil on canvas, 73.5 x 112 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 4030.

5. The Rock of Bayard, Dinant, Belgium.

*Metamorphoses* of Ovid, who recounts how Daedalus, the most ingenious inventor of the ancient world, crafted wings of wax and feathers to allow him and his son, Icarus, to escape from the labyrinth of King Minos. Minos had commanded Daedalus to build the labyrinth to contain the mythic monster Minotaur, then imprisoned the designer in his own creation. The story of Icarus is a fantasy of human-powered flight, and became a symbol of overreaching ambition. Icarus, quickly forgetting his father's warnings not to try to fly too high, soared too close to the sun and his wings melted, and he plummeted into the sea and drowned. A later print by Jacob (or Jacques) de Gheyn II shows the hapless aeronaut tumbling from the sky above a rocky coast by the sea (plate 9).

The labyrinth of Daedalus was depicted by Hieronymus Cock and others (plate 8).[51] The labyrinth, the proud construction of the Greek engineer, became a symbol of the snares of earthly life and a metaphor for life's pilgrimage, challenging the seeker to find the center or to escape the maze. Cock's circular labyrinth echoes the maze design in the floor of Chartres Cathedral, where it serves as an aid to meditation. To see the labyrinth laid out in a work of art allows the viewer to vicariously trace this circuitous path, reliving the frustrations of the journey and perhaps the pilgrim's ultimate success.

Pieter Bruegel's famous painting of the *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (two versions; one in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels, fig. 4, and one in the collection of the Van Buuren Museum in Brussels) has inspired many poets and artists with its deep panoramic landscape and close focus on the mundane activity of a peasant plowing in the foreground. The tiny splash of the fallen Icarus is almost unnoticed by the figures in the foreground and by the viewer, and it is the broad expanse of the coastal landscape that is remembered. There is a tension between the expansive realism of the landscapes and the allegory of the mythic subject of Icarus, which some have seen as signaling the end of the medieval allegorical tradition.[52]

In flight, the world is revealed in a panoramic view; there was a strong market for these "world landscapes" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and artists vied to create such expansive vistas.[53] The rocky promontories that are often seen might seem fictional in the flat landscape of the Lowlands, but many are inspired by real scenes in the Ardennes. Hieronymus Cock's print of *Abraham and Isaac on the Road to the Place of Sacrifice* of 1558 shows dramatic rocky peaks that are not unlike some of the landscapes around Dinant and Namur such as the Rock of Bayard (fig. 5).[54] Views of the Alps, as depicted by Pieter Bruegel and reported by other travelers, were also quite influential.[55] Many landscape prints are composites rather than topographically accurate scenes.

Paul Brill (1554 Antwerp–Rome 1626) was a pioneer of landscape for its own sake in drawings and paintings. His *Landscape with Artist Overlooking a Valley* is a remarkable study of a hilly landscape with tall trees, and a small rendering in the left foreground of an artist with his sketchpad, capturing the scene that is represented in the drawing (plate 20). The drawing celebrates not just the wonderful landscape itself, but the act of draw-

ing it; it is a representation of the process of art-making. The small figure of the artist in this wholly secular scene is tiny in scale, just like the proportions of the holy figures and mythological characters in Hieronymus Cock's prints. The drama and beauty of the landscape is the main subject.

The many depictions of winter scenes, including skating on frozen canals, are visual evidence of the cooling period known as the Little Ice Age (1400–1870), which was particularly severe in the late sixteenth century.[56] Prints after drawings by Pieter Bruegel and Hans Bol (plate 17) show people slipping on or even breaking through the ice, comic scenes that also have an underlying message about the uncertainties of life. Some even show athletes playing *ijscolf*, a form of golf played on ice. One of these is *Winter Landscape with Golf and Hockey* by Jacob de Gheyn II (1565 Antwerp–The Hague 1629), an etching after a painting by Roelandt Savery (plate 18). A form of ice golf can be seen in the background of Pieter Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow* (1565, fig. 6), and in many paintings and drawings by the Dutch artist Hendrik van Avercamp (1585–1634). The slippery field of the frozen canals would definitely add a layer of chance to any game of *ijscolf*. The enjoyment of life and sport is not hindered by the winter season.

6. Pieter Bruegel, *Hunters in the Snow* (detail), 1565. Oil on wood panel, 117 x 162 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, GG 1838.

In the seventeenth century, we see more topographically accurate depictions of specific landscapes, such as the drawings by Barend (or Barnardus) Klotz, who drew a *View toward Mechelen* in 1674 (plate 33), and his brother, Valentin Klotz (1650 Maastricht–The Hague 1721), who created the strikingly deep *View of the Church on the Ring* in 1672 (plate 34). Barend's portrayal of Mechelen (Malines) may be compressed to emphasize the picturesque interest of the scene, but the stark geometry of Valentin's composition seems both truthful in its ordinariness and yet modern in its taut balance of horizontal and diagonal lines. Some speculate that the artist used a portable camera obscura to create this panoramic view.[57]

Many prints of this era show an accumulation of specific buildings and sites, providing a rich record of the built environment. Sometimes the landscape seems almost like a theater setting. The figures may represent burghers in their urban life, nobles in their aristocratic parks, or religious figures in the context of church or monastic grounds. Lucas Gassel (c. 1490 Helmond–Brussels 1568/9) depicted a *Landscape with Abraham and Angels* in a drawing that was etched by Joannes van Doetecum (c. 1530 Deventer [active Antwerp 1554–59]–Haarlem c. 1605) or Lucas van Doetecum (Deventer [active Antwerp 1554–59]–Deventer, before 1589). The print was published by Hieronymus Cock in Antwerp in about 1560–64. St. Jerome is seen in the left foreground, in prayerful contemplation of a crucifix. He is quite small in comparison to the overall scene, however, which incorporates a highly detailed view of a well-ordered monastery and church in the middle ground, and a distant view of a Netherlandish town, complete with windmills. A few camels wander into the scene in the right foreground to remind the viewer of the saint's original locale. The contemporary architecture and Flemish setting of Jerome's religious devotion reinforced the continuing relevance of his faith to the modern audience.

## MYSTERIES OF THE FOREST

Landscape prints of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have left a rich visual record of daily life in both town and country. While many of these scenes are quite domesticated, there are quite a few that feature more rustic locales.[58] Although Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp, and Brussels were large cities built on trade and the cloth industry, dominated by castles, mills, and carefully managed farms, the deep forest continued to exert a strong pull on the artistic imagination. The forest was a realm of unfettered natural expression and primal wildness, replete with myths of wild men and other champions of freedom. The forest represented nature in its purest state.[59] Hunters and woodsmen were figures of the imagination and cultural traditions. Their labors dove-

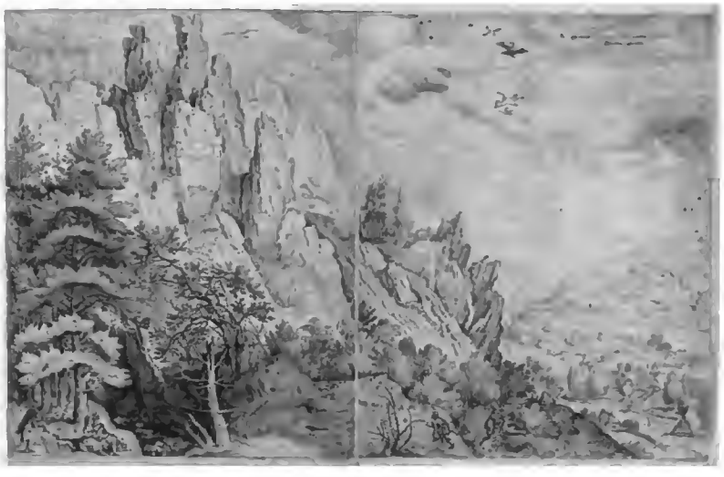
7. David Vinckboons and Sebastiaan Vranckx, *Wooded Landscape with Robbery*, n.d. Oil on canvas, 70 x 113 cm, Museum Rockoxhuis, Antwerp, 77.170.

tailed with the fantasy realm of folk tales and even fairy tales. The dark forest was also a region of lawlessness and danger, and artists such as David Vinckboons (1576 Mechelen–Amsterdam 1632) and Sebastiaan Vranckx (1573 Antwerp–Antwerp 1647) painted scenes of robbers waylaying travelers, the ancestors of the true crime movies of today (fig. 7).

Roelandt Savery (1576–1639) was an artist who traveled extensively throughout his career. Born in Kortrijk (Courtrai), his family moved to Haarlem and Amsterdam when he was young. Beginning about 1603, he worked for ten years for Rudolf II in Prague. He settled in Utrecht in 1619, where he spent the rest of his life. He visited the mountains of Tyrol, and many of his paintings and drawings reflect this experience. The exquisite *Alpine Landscape with Three Hunters* is one of a pair of oil paintings on copper in our exhibition (plates 21–22). The large engraving of a *Mountainous Landscape with a Pair of Lovers and a Sportsman* has been attributed to Jacob Matham, who made the print after a drawing by Savery in about 1606 (plate 23, fig. 8). This large plate is actually one half of a pair of prints. The print has the dual theme of lovers finding freedom in the forest, and hunters pitting themselves against nature. On a more intimate scale, the six small etchings by Savery show landscapes of rolling hills, castles, and massive trees defining bucolic compositions where people live quietly in nature (plate 24).

The extraordinary chiaroscuro woodcuts of Hendrick Goltzius depict a range of images of rural cottages, rocky sea coasts, waterfalls and mills, and a pair of lovers in wooded seclusion (plate 27). These small landscapes date from 1597 to 1600, and were printed in three colors on white paper, closely imitating the effect of wash drawings. Goltzius was born in Mühlbracht (now Brüggen-Bracht-am-Niederrhein), in 1558, and died in Haarlem in 1617. A versatile artist, he is renowned for his figurative works in various print media.

A shadowy forest setting was depicted by Pieter Stevens in *A Forest with a Wooden Bridge* (plate 26). Stevens was born in Mechelen in about 1567 and died in Prague after 1624. The print was etched by Aegidius Sadeler II. Sadeler was born in Antwerp in 1568, but like Stevens and Goltzius, he was also drawn to the court of Rudolf II in Prague, where he died in 1629. Flemish artists were much sought after, and frequently traveled in the service of their patrons.



8. Roelandt Savery, print attributed to Jacob Matham, *Mountainous Landscape with a Pair of Lovers and a Sportsman*, c. 1606. Engraving printed on two plates, 49.2 x 75.7 cm, Hearn Family Trust.

This wild scene is far from the manicured parks of aristocratic domains; such unkempt settings were considered more suitable for peasants and gypsies. Farms and forests were valued as a source of wealth, and though populated by figures of lower status, they also signified a kind of freedom.[60]

## ACADEMIES OF ART

Developments in the official institutions of art during the eighteenth century led to a devaluation of landscape painting. In 1773, painters and sculptors were freed from the control of the guilds and trade associations by an Austrian edict.[60] This regulation was passed in favor of the new Academies of Art that had recently been developed, following the French model for centralized art instruction. The French Academy had been established in 1648, and given the exclusive right to instruction in life drawing (drawing from a model). The French Academy charter was accepted

by Parliament in 1664, following a Royal Decree in 1663. An Academy of Fine Arts was established in Brussels in 1711. The period of French rule from 1794 to 1814, and also the Dutch rule from 1815 to 1830, continued to solidify the institutionalization of art. One innovation borrowed from the French was the annual exhibition of art works selected by an official jury, known as the Salon. (The term "Salon" came from the fact that the first exhibitions by the French Academy were held in the Salon Carré of the Louvre.) These were organized either by the Academies or by Societies for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in different cities. Although later artists were to rebel against them, the Salons offered official prestige for artists, and the institution spread quickly: Ghent, 1796; Brussels, 1811; Mechelen, 1812; Antwerp, 1813.

Academic teaching tended to favor classicism, and neoclassicism became the dominant style in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The prestige of that style in Belgium was increased by the presence of Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), who spent the last years of his life in Brussels after the fall of Napoleon in 1815. It is worth noting that David never painted a pure landscape, and vigorously promoted the academic hierarchy of genres, which put history painting at the top and still life and landscape at the bottom.

9. Marche-les-dames on the Meuse, from *La Belgique monumentale, historique et pittoresque*, vol. 1 (Brussels: A. Jamar and Ch. Hen, 1844). Reproduced from Lut Pil, *"Pour le plaisir des yeux": Het pittoreske landschap in de Belgische kunst; 19de-eeuwse retoriek en beeldvorming* (Leuven: Garant, 1993), 14.

## SOUVENIRS FOR THE TOURIST MARKET

Not all art followed the academic strictures, however. The development of tourism in the eighteenth century led to a market for souvenirs of specific sites, either visited on the Grand Tour by aristocrats, or at recreational spas for the upper and middle classes. Spa, in the Ardennes near Liège, was one of earliest tourist resorts, visited for the healthful qualities of its spring waters. Charles II of England was but one of a number of aristocratic patrons of the springs at Spa. Antoine Le Loup (1730–1802) was a member of a family of artists, and made detailed drawings of the environs around Spa in pen and pencil drawings that were published as lithographs later (plate 35). These pleasant landscapes fall in the category of the picturesque, and anticipate the later development of the mass market for art fostered by the development of lithography. The restorative power of nature was memorialized in these souvenir drawings, and made accessible to a wider public.

## THE PICTURESQUE (*PITTORESQUE* OR *SCHILDERACHTIG*)

Dutch and Flemish landscapes of the Baroque era, along with those of Claude Lorraine, were among the chief models for the concept of "the picturesque."[62] The term was popularized in English by William Gilpin, who published *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770* in 1782, and organized tours for British tourists seeking to appreciate their native landscape.[63] The term "picturesque" derives from the French "pittoresque," which literally means in the manner of a painting. The Dutch term is "schilderachtig."[64] Eighteenth-century art criticism emphasized three terms: the sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque. The category of the sublime stressed the experiences of astonishment and even terror, while the beautiful was rooted in classical ideals of harmony and pleasure. The picturesque landscape was more irregular, but not terrifying. The sublime was found in scenes of vastness and depths that surpassed human understanding; the picturesque presented more familiar rural scenes, which invited a vicarious and pleasant ramble through the scene. Picturesque scenes often feature winding rivers or roads, with balancing masses of trees or buildings that frame a central vista that recesses gradually into deep space. This was very popular in Belgium in the first half of the century, reflected in paintings and especially lithographic prints, such as those illustrating compilations of regional landscapes (fig. 9).

L'ARTISTE,

10. Vignette from *L'Artiste, Revue des Arts et de la Littérature* (Brussels) 1, no. 41 (June 8, 1834). From Pil, *"Pour le plaisir des yeux,"* 101.

## ROMANTICISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

In Europe and America, landscape painting rose to new prominence in the nineteenth century as a vehicle for personal expression combined with an almost scientific fascination with recording natural phenomena.[65] Artists such as John Constable in England and Gilles-François Closson (1796 Liège–Liège 1842)[66] and Jean-Michel Cels (1819 The Hague–Brussels 1894) in Belgium (plate 37) created series of pictures studying the ever-changing spectacle of clouds and sky. These quick oil sketches allowed the artists to explore the techniques of representation as well as to record their empirical observations. Science and poetry were combined in the process of making marks on the canvas and matching them to the visual phenomena being represented, as Ernst Gombrich described in *Art and Illusion*.[67] The viewer must then use his or her imagination to comprehend what they see, a dynamic relationship that was already noted by William Wordsworth, who wrote that the audience must actively interpret "all the mighty world / Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create, / And what perceive."[68] The creation of a work of art involves observation, memory, and imagination as well as technical skill. The image of the artist as a seeker and even hunter of motifs that he could capture became popular, as seen on the headpiece of the Brussels journal *L'Artiste, Revue des Arts et de la Littérature* in 1834 (fig. 10).

Romantic artists and writers found that the sublime vastness of nature offered a perfect correlative to the spiritual experience of feeling one's ego join in a union with a higher power.[69] This could find echoes in religion or nationalism, or any context where the individual ego melds with a larger entity.

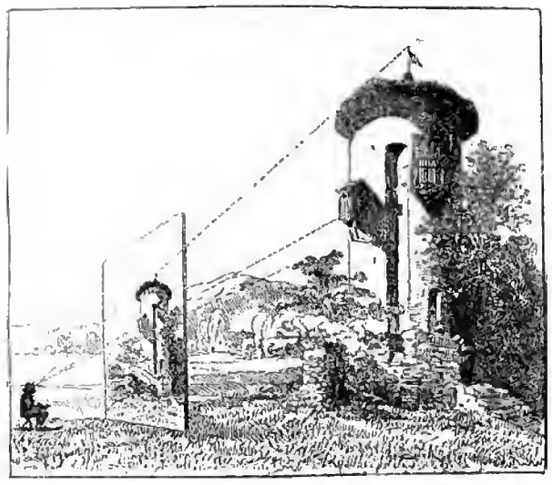
Some romantic artists sought a new intensity of emotion with sensational pictures that could lead to an expansion of the viewer's sense of self. A new appreciation of wildness, even savageness, was combined with a sense of the precariousness of the human condition. The aesthetic category of the sublime, established in classical times, was extended in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[70] Eugène-Joseph Verboeckhoven's *Mountainous Landscape with Bridge* (plate 36) juxtaposes the serene and luminous skies above with the dark abyss of the rocky chasm that is spanned by a breathtakingly rickety bridge. Verboeckhoven (1799 Comines-Warneton–Schaerbeek 1881) is more generally known for his animal paintings and anecdotal traditionalist landscapes, but this picture from the Metropolitan Museum has real drama. Theatrical and even melodramatic, it seems like a forerunner of bridges in adventure films such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Such sensationalism was to be downplayed by realist artists at mid-century.

Verboeckhoven took part in the Belgian Revolution against the Dutch in 1830 that led to Belgian independence. He was appointed the first Director General of the Brussels Museums of Fine Arts. He was a member of the Committee of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts throughout his life, and was also a member of the Academies of Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, St. Petersburg, and Amsterdam. His role as a teacher was quite significant.

Another artist who had an important academic career but is nonetheless poorly documented is François Bossuet. Bossuet was born in Ypres in 1798, and died in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode in 1889. The main source of information on his career is the entry in Jules Du Jardin's *L'art flamand* of 1898.[71] He began studying art at fourteen in Ypres, and then at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. Through the early 1830s, he worked as a civil servant, but became a professor of perspective at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels in 1835, after having published a two-volume book on the subject.[72] He taught courses on perspective until 1876.[73] The importance of perspective for landscape artists is shown in a manual published by Armand Cassagne (1823–1907), a Belgian artist who painted and taught in Barbizon 1857–68 (fig. 11).

Bossuet's delightful picture of *Ostend. The Plain Viewed from the Top of the Dunes to the West* demonstrates his fluency in the art of perspective and the technique of oil painting (plate 38). The low horizon and expanse of clouds evokes the setting and the tradition of Netherlandish painting of the seventeenth century.

## REALISM IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY—THE SCHOOL OF TERVUREN



11. Armand Cassagne, *Traité pratique de perspective* (Paris: Ch. Fouraut, 1873), 18, fig. 44.

Contrary to the centralizing tendencies of nineteenth-century urbanism, many artists found the depiction of regional landscapes to be a path toward independence. Although Jean F. Buyck, former director of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp, noted that "perhaps the worst offense for an artist is to be labeled a 'provincialist,'" provincial art movements thrived at mid-century, and found a ready market for their paintings.[74] The most flamboyant champion of provincialism was Gustave Courbet (1819–77), who liked to describe himself as "the master of Ornans," rather than adopt a Parisian identity. Perhaps because landscape was less constrained by academic principles, it allowed a high degree of experimentation. In an era of rising nationalism, such portrayals of familiar sites were popular.

Théodore Fourmois (1814 Presles–Ixelles 1871) was one of the first Belgian artists to break away from the traditional formulae of landscape imagery and add fresh direct observations.[75] After studying at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, he first exhibited a landscape painting at the Brussels Salon in 1836.[76] His depiction of the bucolic landscape at La Hulpe from 1865 is a quiet scene of cows browsing in a pasture, with a substantial barn barely glimpsed behind two large shady trees, and a light-filled valley in the distance (plate 39). The chiaroscuro effect of sunlight and shade is very naturally rendered here.

Fourmois was a forerunner of the School of Tervuren, which was a group of like-minded artists who either settled in or often visited the forests and fields of Tervuren, just east of Brussels, to paint landscapes.[77] Influenced by the artists of the Barbizon School, especially Jean-François Millet and Gustave Courbet, these artists devoted themselves to the quiet scenes of the Belgian countryside. Artists began to visit Tervuren and the nearby Forest of Soignes regularly in the 1840s and 1850s, and by 1863 a small artist colony had been established there.

The label "School of Tervuren" is not unproblematic; there was no formal organization of artists associated with it. The term was first used in 1866, and then only infrequently. Elise Gilles has recently made a thoughtful study on the ambiguities and vicissitudes of the phrase.[78] Camille Lemonnier is the most frequently cited source for the term in the nineteenth century.[79] Tervuren was only one of many groups of artists who gathered to paint landscapes in the second half of the nineteenth century. Locales such as Barbizon,[80] Pont-Aven,[81] and Giverny[82] in France have become famous, along with Worpswede,[83] Darmstadt,[84] and Murnau[85] in Germany and Skagen[86] in Denmark. There are parallels with the Hudson River School in the United States.[87] In Belgium clusters of artists were also found in Anseremme near Dinant,[88] Verviers near Liège,[89] Sint-Martens-Latem near Ghent,[90] and Brasschaat and the Scheldt region near Antwerp. Others gathered at Calmpthout in the Campine (Kempen) region also near Antwerp, and at Termond.[91] Dominique Marechal reminds us in his essay "Bruges as a Crossroads of European Symbolism" that the medieval city of Bruges also attracted many artists, including the American William Merritt Chase, who taught summer classes there in the early twentieth century. These somewhat informal associations of artists played an important role in breaking the hold of the academic tradition.

Individual artists sought out certain regions to paint that corresponded to their personal history; Fernand Khnopff made many paintings of his family property at Fosset (near Bastogne), and Léon Frederic often painted scenes of Nafraiture deep in the Ardennes. James Ensor and Léon Spilliaert painted sites in Ostend and on the Belgian coast. All of these artists have in common an emotional response to a particular region and to nature that is essentially romantic, and a commitment to a realist approach that faithfully records natural phenomena. The regionalist aspect is connected to emerging concepts of national identity, and the personal connection reflects the growing emphasis on personal experience and authenticity. These artists negotiate a synthesis of tradition and stylistic innovation. Above all, nature offered an escape from the modern city, which provided its own spectacle but which could be overwhelming. Constantin Meunier's depictions of the industrial land-

12. A. Heins, *Beach at Ostend*, drawing made from life for *La Belgique* by Camille Lemonnier (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1888), 429.

scapes around Charleroi are crushingly realistic but also sublime in their grandeur. The refuge in the country provided an antidote to the ills described by Max Nordau in his diatribe against modernism, *Degeneration* (1892).[92] The growth of tourism in the nineteenth century built on the success of upper class retreats such as Spa, expanding to seaside resorts such as Ostend and Blankenbergh for the middle classes (fig. 12). Rural retreats such as Tervuren and the Forest of Soignes were easily accessible by train or tram. Bruges was a special case of a medieval city that became an international tourist attraction in this period.

Although the concept of a School of Tervuren must be treated with caution, the body of work produced there is extremely interesting. The first painter to settle in the environs of Tervuren was Hippolyte Boulenger (1837 Tournai–Brussels 1874), who came for an extended sojourn in 1863. Boulenger's parents were French, and he received his first artistic training in Paris. He returned to Brussels in 1853. In 1861, he studied landscape painting with Joseph Quinaux at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, sharing with Quinaux admiration for the painters of Barbizon in France. His *Back on the Farm* of 1869 is a spring-like contrast of light and dark, with the farmhouse cut off at right, nestled behind several tall trees (plate 41). A large flowering tree sprawls to the left, and two small figures and a flock of sheep complete the foreground and middle ground. This picture was painted at a happy and productive time of his life, in the year that he married. He died young, at age thirty-seven, his health undermined by epilepsy and alcohol.[93] Praising his ability to capture the beauty of nature, Paul Colin declared in 1930 that "Never again has our school known such a magician."[94]

Boulenger and his fellow artists Théodore Fourmois, Joseph Coosemans, and others met often at the inn *Au Renard* (*In den Vos*) on the market square of Tervuren. In 1866 he exhibited at the Salon in Brussels identifying himself as part of the "School of Tervuren."[95] His landscape sketches are fresh, and show his continuing interest in romantic self-expression and the direct observation of nature of the realists.

Joseph-Théodore Coosemans (1828 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1904) came late to painting, after a career as the town secretary in Tervuren. He received his first painting lessons from Théodore Fourmois.[96] His painting of a twilight scene of the *Pond at the Castle of Robiano-Tervuren*, 1863 is one of his earliest works, and is an accomplished example of tonal subtleties (plate 44). His *Landscape in the Countryside* of just three years later shows a more vigorous technique, suited to capturing the windy day (plate 45). Coosemans first exhibited in 1864, and in 1868 he was one of the founding members of the Free Society of Fine Arts.[97] In 1876 he was cited as "the current leader of the School of Tervuren."[98] In 1887 he was appointed professor at the Higher Institute of Fine Arts in Antwerp.

Marly
Embarcadère
Vertrekplaats
Excursions par Bateau Mouche entre Bruxelles et Anvers. Prix réduit pour excursions collectives.
Plezierlochtjes per stoomboot tusschen Brussel en Antwerpen. Verminderd tarief voor scholen.

13. Landing stage at Marly for bateau mouche excursions between Brussels and Antwerp, postcard from the early twentieth century.

Among the first group of artists that painted at Tervuren with Joseph Coosemans was Louis Crépin. Crépin was born in Fives, near Lille, France in 1828, and died in Etterbeek, a commune of Brussels, in 1887. It is not known when he moved to Belgium, but he was a founding member of the Free Society of Fine Arts in 1868. His painting of *Le Marly, Edge of the Willebroeck Canal* of 1877 is a nearly impressionist depiction of this inn on the bank of the canal that runs from Brussels to the port of Antwerp (plate 46).[99] This canal was popular for recreational excursions as well as commerce (fig. 13).

Joseph Quinaux (1822 Namur–Schaerbeek 1895) was an important instructor at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels, where he taught from 1876 until his death in 1895. His specialty was landscape, and among his pupils were Hippolyte Boulenger and Isidore Verheyden. He was trained in

Namur, and spent much of the 1840s in the Forest of Fontainebleau where he came into contact with the painters of the Barbizon School. In 1857 he returned to Barbizon.

He first exhibited in Antwerp in 1840, and Brussels in 1842, and took part in nearly all subsequent Salons. Often considered to be a bridge between the romantics and the later realists, Quinaux had remarkable technical skills.[100] His handling of the tensions between the two dimensional surface of the canvas and the illusion of depth is quite sophisticated. In *River* of 1886 (plate 48), he counterbalances the smooth and luminous depiction of the background and the shady trees in the middle ground with bold touches of green pigment for the waterlilies in the foreground. These simultaneously indicate the lily pads floating on the top of the pond, and sit flat on the surface of the canvas. The same marks suggest three dimensions and call attention to the flat surface of the picture, combining illusionism and abstraction.

14. Louis Dubois, *The Dead Deer—Solitude*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 135 x 248 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 3384.

## THE INFLUENCE OF GUSTAVE COURBET

Reacting against the exoticism and drama of some romantic art, realist artists at mid-century stressed their search for authenticity as well as self-expression, painting what they knew best, their own landscape. In this search for the Real they paralleled Gustave Courbet, who was quoted in 1867 as saying "To paint a country, you must know it. I know my homeland, so I paint it."[101]

Belgium was very important for Courbet, who found a warm reception among Belgian artists and patrons. *The Stonebreakers* (1849, formerly Gemäldegalerie, Dresden, presumed destroyed in 1945) electrified Belgian artists when it was shown in Brussels in 1851.[102] Dominique Marechal has thoroughly investigated Courbet's voyages to Belgium in his essay "Belgium and the Netherlands through the Eyes of Courbet" in *Courbet: Mapping Realism*.[103] The French realist particularly inspired the artists of the Free Society of Fine Arts, which included Louis Dubois among other landscapists.

Courbet's example encouraged the focus on regional scenes, and rural life. His interests in the realities of labor and his radical politics challenged the establishment, and he was perhaps the first media star in art history. His provocative pictures and public statements were widely reported in the art press. Courbet adopted the practice of painting in the open air, and this matched his interest in geology, naturalistic landscape features, and the effects of light. Plein-air painting was accompanied by a strong focus on process, and his painterly approach advanced the aesthetic appreciation of the sketch. Courbet's "Realist Manifesto" of 1855 and published letters announced his dedication to painting only what one could see. This did not preclude symbolic meaning, however, as the title of *The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up a Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life* (1855, Musée d'Orsay, Paris) makes clear.

Louis Dubois (1830 Brussels–Brussels 1880) was an energetic supporter of Courbet's art. In 1861 he was probably the "Dubois" registered in Courbet's studio in Paris. He was one of the founders of the independent artist group the Free Society of Fine Arts, and a collaborator on their journal, *L'Art Libre*, which promoted Courbet's art.[104] Dubois's vigorously painted study of *Dunes* of 1879 shares Courbet's painterly approach (plate 49). His stark image of a dead deer on the rocky outcropping overlooking the landscape is a memento mori, a reminder that death is the inevitable outcome of the hunt (fig. 14). This painting, titled *The Dead Deer—Solitude*, was recently shown in our exhibition *Courbet: Mapping Realism*. The tone is somber but elegiac. Freedom and fatality collide here, and a sensitive individual must recognize the contradictions. The deer, lying still on the ground, was until its last moments emblematic of freedom and yet "a wounded soul." Years ago Kenneth Clark pointed out the paradox of hunting: "it is chiefly through the instinct to kill that man achieves intimacy with the life of nature."[105]

Jean-Baptiste Degreef was born in Brussels in 1852, and died in Auderghem (Brussels) in 1894. He took evening classes at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels between 1866 and 1872.[106] With his friend Hippolyte Boulenger, in 1870 he discovered the abbey of the Rouge-Cloitre (Rood Klooster) in the Forest of Soignes on the outskirts of Brussels, and began to paint landscapes in this site.[107] Degreef moved there in 1883, and spent the rest of his short life there. Many of his works depict this setting, and show a great sensitivity to light and fresh observation of nature. The bright color of works such as *Undergrowth* (plate 50) are solid, but show the influence of impressionism. Degreef was a member of *La Chrysalide* (1875–81), an artistic association founded by Félicien Rops (1833–98).

Théodore T'Scharner (1826–1906), like Félicien Rops, was born in Namur, and he received his first artistic training at the Academy there.[108] From 1850 to 1853 he traveled in California, making drawings of scenes of the Gold Rush.[109] He returned to Belgium in early 1854 and in 1870, he moved into the Château d'Eysden near Maastricht, which he painted many times (plate 53). In 1877 he settled in Veurne (Furnes) on the Belgian coast, where he spent the rest of his life. T'Scharner was a member of the Free Society of Fine Arts. He painted scenes of the villages and coast of Belgium in the style of early impressionism, with bright colors and painterly brushwork. His picturesque scene of the *Canal with Mill* recalls the classic paintings of the seventeenth century by Dutch and Flemish artists (plate 52).

Jean Pierre François Lamorinière (1828 Antwerp–Antwerp 1911) was one of the first Belgian artists to visit and paint in Barbizon beginning in 1853.[110] He studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, and then practiced open-air painting in the Campine and Ardennes regions. He received many honors, including membership in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and the Legion of Honor. He was a member and later president of the Society of Etchers in Antwerp. In 1895 he was made a professor in the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, but had to abandon the post when his vision failed. His painting of a *Landscape in Kempen with Shepherd and Sheep* is a quiet depiction of a solitary shepherd in the high fields, watching over his flock in the soft afternoon light (plate 56). Kempen is the northern region of Belgium that stretches from Antwerp to Maastricht. Lamorinière often painted near Genk and in the Hautes Fagnes (Hoge Venen) region. He was recognized for his almost photographic realism, although younger artists rejected that style.[111] Paul Colin favorably observed in 1930 that Lamorinière "succeeded, with an economy of means...to document the face of some neglected corners in the suburbs of Antwerp and to make visible their poor and silent beauty."[112]

Frans Binjé worked for the Belgian railway and began as a self-taught artist who painted only in his spare time until his forties.[113] He was born in Liège in 1835, and died in Schaerbeek in 1900. He was one of the greatest self-taught painters. Jules Du Jardin quoted Binjé on his career in *L'art flamand* (1900):

> In painting, I was not a student of anyone, writes the artist; I only started to try to paint in 1873, after my marriage. For a few years, I spent my summers in La Hulpe; this is where the idea of trying to paint came to me....I was and am still attached to the Ministry of railways, in the administration of telegraphs, where I spent my whole career: today I am managing inspector.
>
> I was concurrently an official during the week and a painter on Sunday. It was in 1876 that I ventured by pure fantasy to send two works to the triennial salon of Brussels, resigned in advance to see them denied. They were accepted, well placed and newspapers spoke of them! Think how I was delighted...and amazed...
>
> Ten years later, I began also to try watercolor, and was almost immediately appointed a member of the Royal Belgian Society of Watercolorists, where I replaced Huberti[114] who had passed away. I don't like to speak of my success, but I must say that I have had a lot; I can even say that I was one of the spoiled children favored by art critics and the press in general: I was encouraged by innumerable articles, which were a precious stimulant to me...[115]

In 1874 he began working with a member of the School of Tervuren, and was especially influenced by Hippolyte Boulenger and Guillaume Vogels. From 1868 to 1880 Binjé regularly spent the summer months at the artists' colony at Anseremme.

Binjé developed a mastery of realism in open-air painting, working in watercolor and oils, and exhibited often in Belgium and abroad. His *Landscape with Lock* (plate 58) shows the growing influence of the impressionists in its flowing and visible brushwork in the foreground, while the sky is smoothly blended. Binjé was very attentive to matters of technique; in a letter to Octave Maus, the secretary of *Les XX*, he wrote: "The essential characteristic of watercolors is not to resemble any other genre of painting: it should frankly be the stain, the drop of colored water; it should be impulsive, spontaneous...not 'haphazardly' however...but thought over, constructed in advance in the brain, only in broad lines; what feeling, what symphony, just an overall impression."[116]

Binjé was highly regarded by his fellow artists, and by art critics. Emile Verhaeren wrote in *La Jeune Belgique* in 1884:

> Binjé, on the contrary, is very skillful and totally appreciative of the intimate charm of the grassy slope, downhill roads, edges of woods, thickets in terraces, to the vaporous air, fluid and moving, to the muslins of mist, to the steaming gases, to the nature interviewed by Corot, whose nymphs are spirits. Of course, this vision of these sites is nothing epic and grandiose; but it is so relaxing, so meditative, so sweet, so tempting in the hours of fatigue and complete contemplation! It is the little paintings of Binjé that we want to always have before our eyes—rare praise![117]

Fernand Khnopff wrote on his passing in the *Studio*:

> The sudden death of the well-known Brussels landscapist, F. Binjé, has been a sad blow to his fellow artists, with whom he was very popular. After his first amateur efforts, M. Binjé soon took a prominent place among our water-colourists, side by side with his friends Stacquet and Uytterschaut. A few years since he began to paint in oils, with marked success. His work is distinguished by delicacy of sentiment and bold colouring.[118]

Victor Uytterschaut's watercolors were also praised by Fernand Khnopff as "clever and sparkling,"[119] a description that perfectly fits his *Pond in Winter* (plate 59). Uytterschaut was born in Brussels in 1847, and died in 1917 in Boulogne-sur-Mer. From 1859 to 1867 he studied technical drawing and landscape painting at the Academy in Brussels. He was a member of the realist artist association *La Chrysalide* and member of the Royal Society of Belgian Watercolorists.

Independent artist associations multiplied in the second half of the nineteenth century in Belgium, and provided alternative exhibition opportunities from the official Salons. Groups in Brussels included:

*Cercle artistique et littéraire* (Artistic and Literary Circle; 1843–1939)
*Société royale belge des aquarellistes* (Royal Society of Belgian Watercolorists; 1856–1938)
*Société libre des beaux-arts* (Free Society of Fine Arts; 1868–76)[120]
*La Chrysalide* (Chrysalis; 1875–81)
*L'Essor* (The Flight; 1876–91)
*Les XX* (The Twenty; 1883–93)[121]
*Société des aquafortistes belges* (Belgian Etching Association; 1886–1914)
*Le Cercle "Les Hydrophiles"* (The Hydrophile Club; 1884–88)
*La Libre esthétique* (The Free Aesthetic; 1893–1914)[122]
*Le Sillon* (The Furrow; 1893–1926)[123]
*Société des beaux-arts* (Society of Fine Arts; 1893–)
*Pour l'art* (For Art; 1892–1939)
*La Patte de dindon* (The Turkey's Foot; c. 1900)
*Vie et lumière* (Life and Light; 1904)

In Antwerp, groups included the *Cercle des XIII* (Circle of Thirteen; 1891–99), *Kunst van Heden* (Art of Today; 1905–59) and *Als Ik Kan* (1883–1952).[124] "Als ik kan" (The Best I Can) was the motto of Jan van Eyck. Smaller groups were found in other cities as well.

The traditional rivalries of Brussels and other Belgian cities persisted; Charles Baudelaire cited Antwerp for its particularly strong individualism in his essay "La pauvre Belgique": "There is no such thing as the Belgian people, properly speaking. There are the Flemish and Walloon races, and there are enemy cities. Behold Antwerp."[125] To this day, rivalries between cities such as Aalst and Dendermonde persist, even if the reasons for them are nearly lost in history.

## A NEW LIGHT: IMPRESSIONISM AND LUMINISM

Light continued to be a major focus for landscape painters, and varieties of impressionism and luminism developed in Belgium.[126] An important example is Camille Wauters, who was born in Temse (Tamise), near Antwerp in 1856; he died in 1919 in Lokeren, between Ghent and Antwerp. Wauters received his first training at the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, studying with Ferdinand De Braekeleer (1792–1883), father of Henri. He may have studied at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels under Joseph Quinaux, but the evidence for this is inconclusive.[127]

Wauters later spent time at Barbizon and traveled extensively, from Scandinavia to Egypt. His works are quite luminous, and show a marked sensitivity to light effects. His *Sunset* (plate 60) is a good example of his mastery of subtle color and light. It has all the freshness of a quick sketch executed on the spot, but with a solid composition. One of the lesser-known Belgian landscapists, he was honored with a retrospective exhibition at the Gemeentemuseum in Temse in 2000.[128]

Frans van Kuyck (1852–1915) was an artist who was born and died in Antwerp. He was first taught by his father, Louis van Kuyck, and then studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp under François Lamorinière, an advocate of painting in the open air. He later became a teacher at the Academy, and served as deputy director there from 1895 until 1915.[129] He was active in Antwerp politics and cultural affairs, and is credited with helping to establish Mother's Day in Belgium—the first in the world—with a pamphlet published in 1913.[130]

Van Kuyck's painting of a *Marsh at Twilight* shows a keen interest in light and color (plate 61), and in plein-air painting and its new focus on the process of making art. The artwork is beginning to be a conceptual object—abstract and realist at the same time. Landscape is a potent example of the artifice of representation as well as a record of empirical observations. These works encourage a meditative appreciation, and viewers could interpret them according to their subjective experience.

The villages on the banks of the Leie (Lys) River just west of Ghent attracted groups of artists. One of these, Emile Claus (1849 Waregem–Astene 1924), created his own version of impressionism using more abstract, visible, autonomous touches that are signifiers of individuality, authenticity, and spontaneity.[131] His use of brighter color distinguished him from the earlier Belgian landscape artists. The impact of impressionism in Belgium was noted by Emile Verhaeren in 1886:

> A new understanding of life was born, and from that time the ancient and double preoccupation of *line* and *color* vanished, and there remained only the unique and splendid study of the *active light*. Active, because it now controls the painting. It determines the appearance of objects, their form, their edges, which it in turn gnaws, inflects, or exaggerates. It makes the color that it disintegrates in tones of infinite variety, scaled or abrupt, bright or muffled. *Shadow*, which in most of the old paintings is only an opaque black mass, also becomes illuminated, transparent, lively, and tinted.[132]

In 1898 Verhaeren elaborated, specifically describing Claus: "To some painters a picture is a combination of slabs of colour, of patches of paint. M. Claus assumes that colour has no value of itself; the local tones are constantly modified. It may be said of him that he only paints things in a state of transition, the fading of one tint into another; the very movement of light, the most transient aspect of things."[133]

Claus's subjects are rooted in Flemish life, though the style is French. He spent winters in Paris between 1888 and 1890, reinforcing his ties to the new style.[134] He moved to the rural village of Astene, on the Leie River near Ghent, in the mid-1880s. A former hunting lodge known locally as *'t Rattenkasteel* (the Rat Castle) became his house and studio, and after remodeling was rechristened *Zonneschijn* (Sunshine).[135]

Emile Claus's painting *Daisies*, a scene of a flower-filled field and household labor, shows influence from the impressionism of Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro, with an intimate image of domestic life (fig. 15). In this picture, the humble wild daisies flood the foreground, while in the background the daily work of laundry goes on, with clothes being hung to dry in the sun. In Claus's paintings, figures are seldom dissolved by the light and color, as they are in Monet's contemporaneous works of late impressionism. Nature and rural life are idealized, without the dark undertones of realist scenes of labor.

15. Emile Claus, *Daisies*, 1897. Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 73.5 cm, Simon Collection.

## ANTWERP AND THE SCHELDT REGION

Although known today mostly for his detailed interiors that often feature views through windows, Henri De Braekeleer (1840 Antwerp–Antwerp 1888) also painted wonderful landscape scenes in the environs of Antwerp. His view of *The Scheldt near Antwerp* (plate 62) exemplifies his realism in the juxtaposition of the muddy riverbank with the distant silhouette of the towers of Antwerp. The wide format of this small painting owes something to the popularity of panoramic photographs and compositions in the nineteenth century, as well as to the panoramic format of some landscapes by the old masters of the Northern Baroque (fig. 16).

De Braekeleer's landscapes and artistic process are the subject of Alison Hokanson's essay "Henri De Braeleleer and Belgian Landscape Painting in the 1870s and 1880s" in this volume.[136] Henri De Braekeleer studied at the Antwerp Academy from the time he was fourteen. His uncle was the famous history painter, Henri Leys, and De Braekeleer learned much from him. De Braekeleer won a gold medal at the Brussels Salon in 1872, and a medal of honor at the World's Fair in Vienna in 1873.

The Scheldt River in the environs of Antwerp was an important subject for many artists. Frans van Leemputten was a noted realist artist in the second half the nineteenth century.[137] Born in Werchter in 1850, he studied art at the Antwerp Academy of Fine Arts and from 1865 to 1872 he took evening classes at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels. From 1874 he exhibited regularly at the Antwerp Salon, and in 1892 he became an instructor at the Antwerp Academy. He died in 1914 in Antwerp.

Constantin Meunier encouraged Van Leemputten to paint in the open air.[138] His large painting of *Impressions on the Scheldt* of 1884 (plate 64) shows an artist—perhaps a self-portrait?—seen from the back seated in a boat on the river. The man is sketching the view before him on a pad that we can barely see. He is totally absorbed in his work, rendering the view before him, translating his visual impressions into signifying marks on the two

16. Hans Bol (1534–93), *Panoramic View of Antwerp and Its Port*, 1583. Oil on panel, 6 x 25 cm, Museum Rockoxhuis, Antwerp, 2003.1.

dimensional surface. The large figure and partial view of the boat dominates the picture frame, the cropping recalling photographic compositions.

Théodore Verstraete (1850 Ghent–Antwerp 1907) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp, but abandoned academic formulae to paint directly from nature in the open air. He even built a mobile studio in order to paint landscapes on site.[139] Verstraete was a founding member of *Les XX* in Brussels and the *Cercle des XIII* in Antwerp. He painted realist scenes of the life of the rural poor. His impressionistic scene of *The Vigil* of 1888 (plate 65) shows figures dressed in black coming through the snow to keep vigil in a neighbor's house. The delicate snowflakes contrast with the stolid figures, but both speak to themes of mortality and the brevity of life. Verstraete's career was unfortunately cut short in 1895 by the onset of mental illness. His fellow artist, Fernand Khnopff, wrote in the *Studio* in 1897:

> Verstraete has treated landscape not from the colourist's point of view alone. He has grasped and recorded the spirit of the soil in its subtlest aspects and in his most characteristic manner, and with all possible delicacy and intensity of feeling revealed the close connection between Man and the Earth he inhabits. What Segantini (whose work was recently dealt with in *The Studio*) has done for the Italian Alps, that Verstraete has done for the neighbourhood of Antwerp, where he has lived and worked.[140]

Khnopff emphasized the "close connection between Man and the Earth he inhabits," suggesting a spiritual dimension to these scenes of everyday life and the Belgian landscape. There are parallels to the American transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), who discerned a higher reality in nature and the simple lives of self-reliant farmers. Emerson's work was quite influential in Belgium in the 1880s and 1890s; the Belgian symbolist poet and playwright Maurice Maeterlinck wrote a preface to his works in 1894.[141]

Agricultural labor had been a central preoccupation for realists in the nineteenth century, as shown by the works of Jean-François Millet and other artists of the Barbizon School. Alfred William "Willy" Finch's painting of a farmer burning off his fields as part of his planting cycle illustrates the humble tasks of farm life (plate 66). A series of prints from c. 1888–92 also capture the beauty and toil of farm life (plate 67). Finch (1854–1930), who was born in Brussels, later moved to Helsinki, Finland where he lived the rest of his life.

The very cosmopolitan Jan Toorop (1858–1928), was born in Indonesia when it was still a Dutch colony, and died in The Hague. Toorop lived from 1882 to 1886 in Brussels, and was voted into the membership of the Belgian avant-garde artist group *Les XX* in 1885. Although he is largely known for his mystical symbolist works, which incorporate influences from Fernand Khnopff, Aubrey Beardsley, and Indonesian shadow puppets, his early *Village of Machelen* of c. 1884 shows him working in the manner of the School of Tervuren (plate 91). Machelen was a village just north of Brussels where he worked with Guillaume van Strydonck, a Belgian landscapist and founding member of *Les XX*, and William Degouve de Nuncques. The largest exhibition of Toorop's many varied works was held in 2016 at The Hague.[142]

*A Conversation* of c. 1899 by Georges Le Brun (1873–1914) depicts a farmer and his wife standing in the yard, pausing from their labors for a discussion (plate 68). Their features are sharply drawn, and the rough stone masonry and crude carpentry adds to the rustic setting. A puddle in the foreground reflects the legs of the farmer and the soft twilight. The composition recalls the peasant scenes of Jean-François Millet and the early works of Vincent van Gogh. Like those two artists, Le Brun sought to depict the dignity and spirituality of simple country life. Le Brun, born in Verviers near the German border, was killed in one of the earliest battles of the First World War in Stuivekenskerke, near Diksmuide.

Charles Mertens (1865–1919) was born in Antwerp, and died abroad in Calverley, England just after the First World War. He trained in the Academy in Antwerp, and became a member of the Antwerp groups *Als Ik Kan* and *Les XIII*, and helped found the group *Kunst van Heden* in 1905.[143] His *Oyster Park in Zeeland* depicts the cultivation of oysters in artificial beds on the coast of Zeeland in a tonalist style akin to luminism (plate 69). Cultivation of oysters in beds leased from the government in Zeeland began in 1870 to counteract a collapse of natural oyster stocks.[144] This shift to farmed oysters from wild-caught bivalves was a success, although it put many traditional fishermen out of work.

## INDUSTRIAL BELGIUM

In the nineteenth century, Belgium was divided between the largely agricultural Flemish-speaking regions, and the heavy industries of iron and coal that were concentrated in the French-speaking regions of Liège-Verviers and Charleroi-Mons.[145] This was the area known as the "Black Country," and these industrialized cities offered scenes of great human drama, hardship, and a kind of modern sublime. Catherine Labio's essay, "'Belgium Is an Industrialist': Pride and Exploitation in the Black Country, 1850–1900" in this volume traces the history of the region.

The artist François Maréchal (1864–1940) spent his entire career in the region of Liège and the industrial Meuse valley.[146] He was born in Housse, Belgium, and died in Liège at the beginning of the Second World War. Maréchal began painting in the open air in 1885, and was drawn to realistic scenes of the industrial landscape and the struggles of the people. His etching of the *Valley of the Meuse* (plate 70) shows the land and sky blackened by factories. Maréchal introduced the first printmaking course at the Royal Academy in Liège, where he was the director.[147]

Constantin Meunier (1831–1905) was one of the most important artists in Belgium in the late nineteenth century.[148] Meunier, who was born and died in Brussels, was trained as both a painter and sculptor, and worked primarily in painting until 1880. Through the 1870s most of his works were of religious themes. After about 1885 he concentrated on creating realist sculptures of workers in Belgium, especially coal miners. His images of miners were inspired by the scenes of misery in the Borinage area near Charleroi. The quick sketch of a female mine worker, a "hiercheuse," bent under the heavy sack of coal that she carries exemplifies the hard lives of these workers in the industrial heart of Belgium (plate 72). These images had a powerful effect on Vincent van Gogh when he briefly served as a minister in that region during the late 1870s. In 1889 Van Gogh praised Meunier's works. Van Gogh wrote: "...a man who is very much my superior, Meunier, has painted the '*Sclôneuses*' of the Borinage and the shift going to the pits, and the factories, their red roofs and their black chimneys against a delicate gray sky—all things that I have dreamed of doing, feeling that it had not been done and that it ought to be painted."[149] Meunier's drawing of *The Environs of Mons, View Taken from the Château,* published in Camille Lemonnier's monumental *La Belgique* in 1888 shows the impact of industrialization on the blackened land (fig. 17). It is a kind of industrial sublime, an almost infernal landscape. His sketch for *Red Roofs* (plate 71) shows his fluency with the use of oil paints, and conveys a sense of the scorched and burnt landscape that shimmers with the heat of the furnaces.

Although Van Gogh's fame has since eclipsed that of Meunier, the Belgian artist's realist images were very highly regarded. From 1887 to 1894 Meunier served as director of the Leuven Academy of Fine Arts, and his house and studio is now an important museum in Brussels.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Belgium was becoming one of the most industrialized and one of the wealthiest nations in the world. Living standards for the working classes were poor, however, and there were violent labor actions in the 1880s and 1890s. In some ways the political situation was more liberal than in other countries—freedom of the press and of association were protected—but until 1893, voting rights were severely limited. Even in 1893, the new universal suffrage (for men) was qualified by a system that gave more votes to property holders. The Belgian Workers' Party (*Parti Ouvrier Belge,* or P.O.B.) was founded in 1885, and won wide support from intellectuals and artists with its program that stressed evolution over revolution.[150] The leaders of the Belgian Workers' Party sought out the participation of writers, artists, and architects. The Workers' Centers (*Maisons du peuple*) that were founded in the major cities included provisions for artistic events to bring culture to the working classes. Many Belgian

17. Constantin Meunier, *The Environs of Mons, View Taken from the Château,* in Lemonnier, *La Belgique,* 451.

18. Marken, the Netherlands.

artists lent their support to these efforts, even if their personal politics remained more conservative.

Claude Monet and Georges Seurat exhibited at *Les XX* in Brussels in the 1880s. Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (1884–86) was shown at *Les XX* in 1887, and had a major impact on artists such as Georges Lemmen,[151] Alfred Willy Finch, Henry van de Velde,[152] and others who adopted the neo-impressionist style. Lemmen was born in Schaerbeek in 1865, and died in Brussels in 1916.[153] He exhibited often, and was a member of *Les XX* and *La Libre esthétique*. Most of his neo-impressionist works were executed between 1890 and 1895. His painting of the industrial zone on the Thames, *Thames Scene, the Elevator* was created in one of his rare trips abroad. In contrast to the industrial scenes of François Maréchal and Constantin Meunier, Lemmen's work is filled with light, and is unusually still and serene (plate 74).

## NOSTALGIA FOR A PRE-INDUSTRIAL PAST

Faced with such dramatic transformations of the landscape and pace of life, a strong current of nostalgia for a simpler time grew in the late nineteenth century. Village life that stood apart from these forces of modernism attracted both tourists and artists. Xavier Mellery (1845 Laeken–Brussels 1921) was an artist who made the transition from academic art to symbolism.[154] He studied at the Brussels Academy from 1860 to 1867, and won the Prix de Rome in 1870. In 1882 he made models for the forty-eight bronze statuettes of trades that ring the park of the Petit Sablon, Brussels.

Nature was his guide from the beginning; he explained to Jules Du Jardin: "departing on my journey for the *Prix de Rome*, I began to follow nature from my first steps in Cologne, reproducing the unexpected emotions I met, painting them with religion, a cult of nature which I still nourish, the soul of things is so strong that a galley-slave in front of a wall can bring out a poem."[155]

In 1878–79, Mellery spent a year in the small village of Marken, just north of Amsterdam, and made numerous paintings and drawings of the quiet life of the village (plates 75–77, fig. 18). Marken was then an island, though now joined to the mainland by a causeway. It was at this time he developed his characteristic appreciation for silence and contemplation.

These drawings began as a commission to illustrate a book by Charles De Coster (1827–79), the famous author of *The Legend of Thyl Ulenspiegel and Lamme Goedzak* (1867). Mellery explained how he came to Marken to Jules Du Jardin:

> Charles De Coster...invited me to illustrate his *Isle of Marken*, written for the *Tour du Monde*. I accepted his proposal and took my box of colors. De Coster, already ill, died during my stay in the island. I was very touched, for, although I had only known him for a short time, his narration of the island of Marken and the country he had made known to me had made me love him, and I should have wanted to see him again. I took some notes for the series of drawings he had asked for. I also made paintings, both of interiors and of the inhabitants. I spent more than two months on the island without leaving it. This island, situated at the end of the world, in the Zuiderzee, with its patriarchal manners, its interiors, and its most picturesque customs, gave me impressions of true joy which, though not profound, were indeed part of the domain of art.[156]

Mellery created many quiet and meditative drawings and paintings of scenes of Bruges, including shadowy, silent interiors, which the artist himself grouped under the heading of *L'Âme des Choses* (The Soul of Things). While most of his art is based on a moody realism, some works, such as *The Fall of the Last Leaves of Autumn* (1890, fig. 19), are clearly allegorical. Mellery was one of Fernand Khnopff's teachers during the mid-1870s, and

his quiet mysterious art had a strong influence on Khnopff. Mellery's drawings of Bruges bring out the mysterious mood of religious devotion that characterized much of the medieval city (plates 78–79).

Echoes of the winter skating scenes of Pieter Bruegel, Hans Bol, and Hendrik van Avercamp discussed earlier can be seen in the etchings of James Ensor (1860–1949). Ensor, who was born and died in Ostend on the Belgian coast, evokes those old masters in his rollicking image of skaters falling and sliding on the ice (fig. 20).[157] The moralizing landscapes of Pieter Bruegel and Hieronymus Cock are evoked in Ensor's extraordinary *Cataclysms* of 1888, which depicts crashing shooting stars, powerful windstorms, colliding trains, and storms at sea (plate 80). The four elements of earth, air, fire, and water share in this violent upheaval, a modern apocalypse.

19. Xavier Mellery, *The Fall of the Last Leaves of Autumn*, 1890. Watercolor, ink, charcoal, and black chalk on paper on cardboard, with gold and silver, 92 x 59 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 3913.

## REALISM TO SYMBOLISM

Symbolist art grew out of realist experiments by artists of the 1880s and 1890s. Their depictions of external reality developed into a more subjectively focused interrogation of existential questions. We can see that clearly in the evolution of the works of Léon Frederic and Fernand Khnopff.

Léon Frederic was born in Brussels in 1856, and died in Schaerbeek in 1940.[158] His father was a goldsmith, and when it became necessary to enlarge his workshop in their small house in the center of town, the children were sent away. Some went to relatives in the country, or to boarding school. At age six, Léon was first sent to live with relatives in Uccle, and later to a Jesuit boarding school in Ghent. He was apprenticed to a decorator at fifteen, and also studied at evening classes at the Brussels Royal Academy. Although he did not win the Prix de Rome, he nevertheless traveled to Italy in 1876–78. This confirmed his love of early Renaissance art, reinforced by his admiration of the British Pre-Raphaelites.

Frederic was strongly attracted to peasant life, and spent many summers in the rural village of Nafraiture in the Ardennes. Here he practiced his craft, and made a series of undated studies of the Walloon landscape, with its rolling hills, verdant fields, and streams (plate 83). These small oil sketches on wood panels may well have been painted out of doors in the open air. They capture different weather conditions and evoke moods (plates 84–85).

As with Millet, his pictures of rural laborers often have an indirect connection to biblical themes. Frederic adopted the triptych format for his picture *The Chalk Sellers* of 1882–83 to emphasize the sacred nature of this working family (fig. 21). The three-panel structure allows the artist to show different moments in time and different locations in one construction. This facilitates the unfolding of the narrative, and connects to the temporal concerns of many nineteenth-century artists, who were preoccupied with issues of past and present, and exploring themes of simultaneity. Sometimes it was through the simultaneous contrast of colors, as in neo-impressionism, or of moments in time, as in this triptych. The religious origins of this format also lends a sense of the sacred to this realist composition. For the same reasons, artists such as Xavier Mellery, Georges Le Brun, and Auguste Donnay also painted triptychs of rural landscapes.[159]

20. James Ensor, *The Skaters*, 1889. Etching and aquatint on paper, 17 x 23 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 40.95.

21. Léon Frederic, *The Chalk Merchants*, 1882–83. Oil on canvas, 200 x 115 cm (wings), 200 x 267.5 cm (center), Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 3263.

This picture shows the daily cycle in the life of a family of workers who make their living by gathering and selling bits of chalk. It was based on the life of an unfortunate individual who modeled frequently for Frederic at that time. The left panel depicts the family setting off for work at dawn, the central panel depicts their humble noon meal, and the right panel shows the family returning home in the evening. There are no strong colors in the painting, corresponding to the drabness of these workers' lives. Frederic has rendered the scenes in a sharply focused, detailed technique that shows the influence of photography. The sharp stones of the roadway that cut at their bare feet seem emblematic of the unyielding poverty that grips their lives. The workers are unidealized and their poverty is starkly presented; they look out at the viewer in a mute appeal for social justice.

Most of Frederic's paintings are distinctly realist in style, but occasionally he created allegorical images. Some of these have socialist messages, such as *The People Will One Day See the Sun Rise* of 1890–91 (Royal Collection, Brussels).[160] This is also a triptych. The left panel shows three naked children caught in a tangled patch of thorns. The center panel shows a huddled mass of old people and weary children struggling on before a massive wave or avalanche. The right panel shows five happy children dancing into a sunlit garden of flowers. They wear coronets of flowers and transparent robes. After much hardship and struggle, the people are ultimately delivered into an earthly paradise in this allegory.

Some of Frederic's paintings go beyond social realism to symbolist allegory. One of the most striking of these is *The Brook*, an immense triptych dedicated to Beethoven in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels. All three panels are filled to overflowing with naked infants who run, play, laugh, and splash in woodland streams. They are titled, from left to right: *L'Eau qui chante* (Singing Water), *L'Eau qui tombe* (Falling Water), and *L'Eau qui dort* (Sleeping Water). The central panel was completed in 1890, and the two wings were executed in 1897–99 (each is dated on the canvas). Each is over two meters high. The unsuspecting observer may be forgiven for not realizing that this was meant to be the transposition of Beethoven's Pastorale Symphony into visual terms. The right panel has the children sleeping with swans, an image corresponding to the adagio portions of the symphony.

22. Léon Frederic, *The Source of Life*, 1890. Oil on canvas. Hearn Family Trust, on loan to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Frederic's triptych is an excellent example of one of realism's cardinal principles, that of discovering hidden correspondences between objects, ideas, sounds, and even scents. These are then to be combined in a work of art, blurring the distinctions between the various art forms. The concept is most clearly explained in Baudelaire's poem "Correspondances" of 1857, which even includes a line: "There are perfumes fresh as the flesh of infants."[161] Frederic's large painting *The Source of Life* (fig. 22) is an alternate version of the central panel of *The Brook*, and features an equally large number of nude children surging through the forest.

Cycles of life are also indicated in Frederic's pair of paintings *Spring* and *Winter* (plates 86–87). As with Pieter Bruegel's *Summer* (plate 6), the labors of the months and the seasonal change in climate are carefully portrayed. His love of the Belgian landscape is also evident in a pair of oil sketches of the undulating dunes along the coast at Heist of 1905 (plates 88–89). His depiction of a *Grainstack at Nafraiture* (plate 90) undoubtedly

dates from the same time, and shows his continuing attachment to the Walloon farmland. The solitary grainstack, almost a conical piece of architecture, sits beside a muddy track that disappears into the distance in diagonal perspective.

Frederic tried to synthesize the styles of Flemish art and the Italian Renaissance. In a perceptive article on Frederic, his fellow artist Fernand Khnopff quoted Octave Maus at length on this aspect of his art:

> The double, and apparently contradictory, influence he underwent invests his art with a very special character. At once idealistic, and yet strongly impregnated with reality, it expresses eternal symbols in the most ordinary language of life. The types by which he is inspired are taken at random and placed on the canvas in all their simple truth of attitude and gesture and feature, with a savour of rusticity at times somewhat acrid, in strong contrast with the nobility of the parts assigned to them. As a poet, Léon Frederic mentally transposes the visions which Nature offers, and, doubtless, when a young mother appears before him in the fields, some inconscient phenomenon reveals to him the ingenuous silhouette of the Madonna.[162]

Although Frederic certainly did not choose his subjects at random, the above remarks point out how he used ordinary people as symbolic types.

One such character, most certainly painted by Frederic in Nafraiture, is an old bearded man wearing a loose toga-like robe who raises his right hand in blessing; this painting is titled *The Old Man Blessing* (plate 82). He looks a bit like St. John the Baptist. Fernand Khnopff commented specifically on this work in 1907:

> There were also painted in this little village of Ardenne a very curious open-air study, *Le Vieillard qui bénit* (1889)....At that period certain novel ideas would seem to have developed in the artist's mind: his conception of art appears to have become enlarged, his sympathy for the sorrows of the poor to have taken a more deliberate form. His dream was that the disinherited of the earth should have their fair share of happiness....In a word, Léon Frederic is indeed a painter of our own time, who has employed to express himself such of the traditional methods as he has judged to be best adapted to his work.[163]

The figure of the old man is brought very close to the picture plane, filling the frame and dominating the expansive landscape behind him. This composition recalls the framing devices of the late fifteenth century, when Flemish artists emphasized the figures in their compositions. A similar design is seen in the haunting *Child with Landscape* (plate 81), which shows unusual psychological depth in the rendering of the young boy.

William Degouve de Nuncques (1867–1935) was born in 1867 in Monthermé, France, in the Ardennes region about five miles from the Belgian border.[164] He was the son of an aristocratic family, and studied art in Belgium. He died in Stavelot, Belgium in 1935. As an adult, he was a friend of Henri De Groux, and posed for Christ in one of his pictures.[165] In 1883 he shared a studio with the Dutch symbolist Jan Toorop. Degouve de Nuncques had particularly strong literary connections. He married a sister-in-law of Emile Verhaeren, and designed the décor for at least one of Maurice Maeterlinck's plays. Emile Verhaeren observed that painting *The House of Mystery, or The Pink House* (1892, fig. 23) "could have served as an illustration for Edgar Allan Poe"—perhaps his Gothic tale "The Fall of the House of Usher."[166]

23. William Degouve de Nuncques, *The House of Mystery, or The Pink House*, 1892. Oil on canvas, 63 x 43 cm, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo.

His symbolist works of the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century include figures as well as landscapes and architectural compositions, which evoke their sense of quiet mystery through eerie and magical light effects. It has been frequently suggested that René Magritte was influ-

enced by some of Degouve de Nuncques's paintings, *The House of Mystery* in particular. The nature of Degouve de Nuncques's art has been aptly described thus: "Whereas the Impressionists saw objects illuminated from the *outside*, Degouve saw them from the *inside*."[167] His nocturnal image of a *Canal, Bruges* is a mysterious and suggestive work (plate 92).

In contrast to the sun-filled landscapes of the luminists, artists such as Degouve de Nuncques, Xavier Mellery, Georges Le Brun, George Minne, and Léon Spilliaert found poetry in the twilight and even blackness of night (plates 79, 92, 114, and 119). French artists such as Odilon Redon also shared this taste for paintings of the night, as demonstrated by the recent exhibition *Noir: The Romance of Black in 19th-Century French Drawings and Prints* at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles.[168] The astonishing pastel of *The Servants of Death (Nocturne)* of c. 1897 links the poetic exploration of darkness of James McNeill Whistler and the musical overtones of a nocturne to the age-old imagery of woodcutters and death. The two figures in a forest by a body of water are sawing planks by hand in the moonlight, presumably for coffins. The living trees have been cut down to build the final home for mortals. The face of the man in the bottom of the saw pit is illuminated with an uncanny glow, making him look already ghost-like (plate 93).

Degouve de Nuncques's large image of *The Shepherd* of 1890 returns to the early Flemish compositions of having a large figure pressed up against the foreground with a deep landscape behind (plate 94). After a three year stay in Mallorca (1899–1902), Degouve's palette brightened, and in 1904 he joined Emile Claus and others in the newly formed artist society *Vie et lumière*. Degouve's painting of a *Barge on a Canal* of 1906 presents a well-ordered scene of a prosperous farmhouse in the Belgian countryside, with a rhythmic *allée* of trees bordering it (plate 95). The whitewashed farm buildings glow in the twilight, with a barge anchored at right in the canal. Peace reigns over all here.

Like many Belgian artists during the First World War, Degouve de Nuncques emigrated to the neutral Netherlands, where he eventually settled in Amsterdam. In 1917 he executed the remarkable colored chalk drawing of the *Brouwersgracht, Amsterdam* (plate 96). The brick façades of the buildings in the middle ground make a backdrop punctuated with a complex rhythm of windows, stairs, and gables. The white seagulls in the foreground make a counterpoint with their fluid flight above the canal. In 1919, Degouve returned to Belgium establishing himself in Stavelot, an ancient town in the Ardennes, located just below Spa. His painting of *Summer, Ardennes* of 1925 was executed in this region (plate 97). This is a sun-drenched image of the deep vista of the Ardennes seen from a hilltop fringed with conifers. Thinly painted, the weave of the white canvas shows through in many areas of the composition. The luminous image returns to the light-filled scenes that he created before the war during several years in Mallorca.

## SYMBOLIST ART—FERNAND KHNOPFF

The most well-known symbolist artist in Belgium is Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921). Khnopff is primarily known for his dense and abstruse works of allegorical symbolism, but he was also committed to painting landscapes. A large portion of his œuvre is in landscapes, and these are always connected to his personal identity. He painted scenes of his childhood in Bruges, and of Fosset, where he spent summers as a child and adult on his family property. The fields, hills, and streams around Fosset gave him many motifs to practice his craft and to confront the issues inherent in representing the external world. I will explore this topic in my essay "Fernand Khnopff's Landscapes: Nature as Mirror" later in this volume, showing that landscape is by no means antithetical to symbolism, and indeed is one of the best exemplars of the symbolist quest to understand the meaning of life and art. This can also be seen in the literary works of the Belgians Emile Verhaeren (1855–1916), Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949), and Georges Rodenbach (1855–98).[169]

The landscape of Belgium was a preoccupation for these symbolist authors; as seen for instance in Emile Verhaeren's *Les campagnes hallucinées* (1893) and *Les villes tentaculaires* (1895). Maeterlinck's *Le trésor des humbles* (1896) also focuses on the simple life in the countryside. Georges Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-morte* (1892) is one of the most famous symbolist novels. Rodenbach's collection of poems *Le miroir de ciel natale* (1898) also uses landscape as a metaphor for interior states of mind. Again describing Bruges, Rodenbach repeatedly used mirror imagery: "Ah! These voices of the country! These reminders of the past! So many reflections in a broken mirror!"[170]

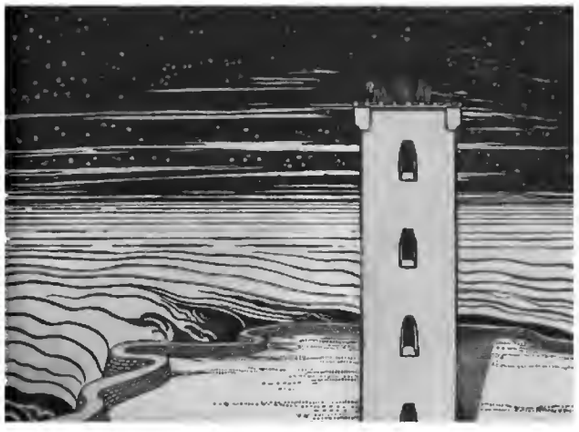
Dominique Marechal builds on his earlier studies of Khnopff's landscapes in his essay in this volume.[171] Marechal, a distinguished curator and native of Bruges, expands his focus to include some fascinating Scandinavian and American artists who were also attracted to the medieval city of Bruges.

## FROM SYMBOLISM TO EXPRESSIONISM—THE NOIRS OF GEORGE MINNE AND LÉON SPILLIAERT

George Minne's work is characterized by a subjective and spiritually intense style inspired by symbolism and art nouveau. Born in Ghent, Minne (1886–1941) was drawn into the progressive currents of artists and writers in Brussels who participated in the exhibitions of *Les XX*. By the late 1890s, Minne joined Gustave van de Woestijne, Valerius De Saedeleer, and several others in establishing an artists' colony at Sint-Martens-Latem, near Ghent, where they developed their individual art at a convenient remove from the urban centers.

Albert Alhadeff is a pioneering scholar of Minne's works, and his essay "*Serres chaudes*: Inside-Outside, Outside-Inside" in this volume illuminates Minne's illustrations for Maeterlinck's first great book of verse.[172] The hothouse was a potent symbol for Maeterlinck's investigation of nature and culture, an artificial environment wherein even tropical flowers could be grown in Belgium. It was not only a metaphor for the modern world's attempts to artificially control nature, but a reflection of the great horticultural industry that flourished in his native Ghent. Camille Lemonnier noted in 1888 the incredible size of the commercial enterprises in Ghent (fig. 24).[173]

24. E. Seeldrayers, *Overview of the Van Houtte Establishment in Ghent*, in Lemonnier, *La Belgique*, 261.



25. Charles Doudelet, illustration to Maurice Maeterlinck's *Douze chansons* (Ghent: Louis van Melle; Paris: P.-V. Stock, 1896).

Charles Doudelet (1861–1938) was born in Lille, but lived much of his life in Ghent. He is well-known for his illustrations to the poetry and plays of Maurice Maeterlinck. In 1896, he was asked to create illustrations for Maeterlinck's *Douze chansons* when Minne was unable to undertake the project. His simple woodcut illustrations deliberately evoke the thick woodblock lines of the fifteenth century, but with a modern art nouveau tension between flatness and depth (fig. 25). Fernand Khnopff wrote that Doudelet was "in the best sense of the word, what is called a 'literary' painter," and quoted his appreciation of Maeterlinck:

> At once he captured my whole admiration. I illustrate his works with conviction, with delight. I experience inconceivable pleasure in getting to understand, in grasping completely, the poet's ideas, in turning them into visible form. Have I succeeded therein? Who shall say? At least one tribute has been paid to my efforts—one which surpasses all other praise, and effaces all the sarcasms with which I have been bespattered. The young writer himself has shown his appreciation of them, My line is essentially "primitive" in style; nevertheless, it is my own creation. Every detail of these drawings is intended to suggest the idea of the *au-delà*.[174]

In 1900, the Belgian government commissioned Doudelet to write a history of bookmaking, which led to an extended absence from Belgium. From 1900 to 1924 Doudelet lived in Italy, which undoubtedly inspired the creation of his impressive *Italian Landscape* (plate 116).

26. Hofstraat in Ostend.

Even in the context of the strongly individual artists who flourished in Belgium in the early twentieth century, Léon Spilliaert is remarkable for his originality. Spilliaert (1881–1946) was born in Ostend, and shared with another Ostend artist, James Ensor, a powerful visual imagination, and a taste for literature and solitude.

Spilliaert bridged the movements of symbolism and expressionism; his 1902–03 drawing inscribed *Maeterlinck Théâtre* pays homage to the Nobel Prize-winning Belgian symbolist playwright (plate 118). The connection to symbolist literature is also found in the haunting image of a woman on a pier titled *Bird of Prey* of 1902 (plate 117), which echoes his earlier illustration to the hallucinatory novel *Les chants de Maldoror* by Isidore Ducasse (who published under the pseudonym Comte de Lautréamont). Also titled *Bird of Prey*, this work of 1900 depicts the recurring symbolist theme of the fatal woman. Spilliaert's art and life is explored in Anne Adriaens-Pannier's essay in this volume.[175]

Spilliaert's *Hofstraat in Ostend* from 1908 prefigures later expressionist art with its film noir atmosphere (plate 119). The French author and mystic François Jollivet-Castelot, who met Spilliaert in 1909, wrote of his art in 1912:

> His art communicates, above all, the vertigo of the infinite. When he paints a seascape, it is as if, there in front of you, is the endless ocean with its mysterious waves, the monotonous beach and a sky which becomes one with the sea in the distance. When he represents the sea-wall or the quay, their lines stretch until they are lost in empty distance....No limits no milestones, no premature stopping places. Horizons flee, plunging through space, creating a dream of thought and hopes.[176]

The Hofstraat is a large street near the coast (fig. 26), and has been largely rebuilt after WWII, but it is clear that the moody atmosphere of Spilliaert's rendering was a product of his imagination.

War shattered the Belgian countryside from 1914 to 1918. Many of the most beautiful and historic Belgian cities lay in ruins. The destruction of Ypres, which once rivaled Bruges as an early commercial center, presented an almost apocalyptic vision which exerted a strange fascination to at least one observer in 1915:

27. Sir William Orpen (1878–1931), *Zonnebeke*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76.2 cm, Tate Britain, London, T07694.

> On Saturday...I took advantage of the temporary calm, and had another look around Ypres. It is really a wonderful sight—weird, grotesque, and desolate of course—but most interesting. I expect the place will be flooded with sight-seers and tourists after the war, and they will be amazed by what they see. The ancient ruins of Pompeii and such places will be simply out of it.[177]

Although the architecture of destroyed cities such as Ypres and Leuven was rebuilt nearly identically in some of the greatest works of restoration ever accomplished, the continuity that artists had felt with tradition was severed. Traditional images and myths that had served as metaphors were now inadequate to express the new reality that had so violently emerged. In 1917 Spilliaert created an extraordinary painting, illustrated in Anne Adriaens-Pannier's

essay in this volume, of exploding star shells against a dark sky that makes the bursts look like some kind of delicate flowers, an ironic twist on the mechanized horror that they illuminated. The abstraction of this work contrasts dramatically with war-time photographs of battles and the mud-filled trenches below. That reality of mud and death is starkly shown in Sir William Orpen's painting of the battlefield of nearby Zonnebeke of 1918 (fig. 27). Nowhere is the nexus of memory and landscape more haunting than in this now peaceful terrain where more than 600,000 soldiers died in the First World War. The Great War, as it was called, challenged the limits of language and the visual arts.

28. René Magritte, *The Human Condition*, 1933. Oil on canvas, 100 x 81 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1987.55.1.

## A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

The Belgian surrealist René Magritte (1898 Lessines–1967 Brussels) was fascinated by paradoxical images that reflect the ambiguity of language and the enigmatic nature of realism. Unlike other surrealists who focused on the role of dreams and the unconscious, Magritte's works are the product of precise calculation as he sought the hidden connections between seemingly random images. In 1929, Magritte published an illustrated essay "Les mots et les images" ("Words and Images") in the journal *La Revolution Surréaliste* that showed the range of his thinking on the nature of pictorial signs.[178] It is clear that he considered the relationship between words and images to be fluid. Linguistic theorists such as Ferdinand de Saussure stressed the arbitrariness of the relationship between words and the objects or concepts they signify, and Magritte's pictorial essay explores the variety of relations between visual forms and meaning. Magritte was fascinated with the role of mimesis in art and thought: "The art of painting—which actually should be called the art of resemblance—enables us to describe in painting a thought that has the potential of becoming visible....Resemblance spontaneously unites these figures in an order that immediately evokes mystery."[179]

Perspective and its implications for knowledge were recurrent themes for Magritte. In 1933 he painted the first of several works titled *The Human Condition* (fig. 28). This picture illustrates the limits of perception by superimposing a painted landscape over a view through a window, collapsing the distinction between inside and outside. Concerning this picture, Magritte wrote:

> In front of a window seen from the inside of a room I placed a painting representing exactly the part of the landscape masked by the painting. The tree represented in the painting therefore hid the tree placed behind it outside the room. It was found for the spectator at once in the interior of the room in the painting, and at the same time, in thought, outside in the real landscape. This is how we see the world; we look outside ourselves and nevertheless we have nothing but a representation in ourselves.[180]

One of Magritte's sources for this image may have been the perspective manual by Armand Cassagne that was long used by students at the Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels (fig. 11).[181] This work exemplifies Alberti's dictum that a painting should resemble a view through a window, but simultaneously undermines our confidence in the evidence of our eyes. The subject is not just landscape, but the nature of vision itself. Reality and symbol are inextricably entwined in nature's mirror.

1 W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), vii.

2 Bernard A. Cook, *Belgium: A History* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 1, notes that Julius Caesar described the Belgae as the bravest (or wildest) of the Celts. See also E. H. Kossmann, *The Low Countries, 1780–1940* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978); Jo Tollebeek, "Historical Representation and the Nation-State in Romantic Belgium (1830–1850)," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59, no. 2 (Apr. 1998): 329–53; and Kas Deprez and Louis Vos, eds., *Nationalism in Belgium: Shifting Identities, 1780–1995* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). Also, Jeffery Howe, "A New Key: Modernism and National Identity in Belgian Art," in *A New Key: Modern Belgian Art in the Simon Collection*, exh. cat. (Chestnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2007), 21–90.

3 Edmond Picard, "L'âme belge" (1897), reprinted in Paul Aron, *La Belgique artistique et littéraire: Une anthologie de langue française (1848–1914)* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1997), 89–97.

4 Picard, "L'âme belge," 97. This translation is mine, as are all that follow, except where noted otherwise: "L'Allemand en Belgique se croit déjà dans un vague midi, en route pour la Provence; le Français se croit déjà plus ou moins dans le nord, vers les latitudes de la Scandinavie." Also quoted by Inga Rossi-Schrimpf, "L'âme des choses!: Aspects of Belgian-Nordic Affinities in the Fin-de-Siècle," in *Anywhere out of the World: Olof Sager-Nelson and His Contemporaries*, ed. Johan Sjöström, exh. cat. (Gothenburg: Göteborgs Konstmuseum, 2015), 157.

5 Henri Pirenne, "La nation belge," in *Compte rendu de la distribution des prix qui a eu lieu le 1er octobre 1899* (Brussels: E. Guyot, 1899), 4–26. Reprinted in Aron, *La Belgique artistique et littéraire*, 98–119. Challenged by Adriaan Verhulst, "The Origins of Towns in the Low Countries and the Pirenne Thesis," *Past and Present* 122 (Feb. 1989): 3–35.

6 Max Rooses, *Art in Flanders* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), 2.

7 Claire Billen and Julie Versele, eds., *La construction des paysages nationaux* (Brussels: Université libre de Bruxelles, Centre d'études canadiennes, 2001).

8 Lisa Deam, "Flemish versus Netherlandish: A Discourse of Nationalism," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 1–33. Also, Hans Vlieghe, "Flemish Art, Does It Really Exist?" *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 26, no. 3 (1998): 187–200.

9 Wessel Krul, "Realism, Renaissance and Nationalism," in *Early Netherlandish Paintings: Rediscovery, Reception and Research*, ed. Bernhard Ridderbos, Anne van Buren, and Henk van Veen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 252–89.

10 Catherine Labio, ed., *Belgian Memories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

11 The classic study is by M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958). See also Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, trans. Katharine H. Jewett (New York: Routledge, 2001).

12 Plato, *The Republic* 10.596d–e.

13 Ernst H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images* (London: Phaidon, 1972). Also David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

14 "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 3, sc. 2, 17–24.

15 Contemporary neuroscience has deep roots in world culture, as John Onians has observed; see his *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

16 John R. Spencer, ed. and trans., *Filarete's Treatise on Architecture: Being the Treatise by Antonio di Piero Averlino, Known as Filarete*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 178v–79r.

17 The hypothesis of David Hockney and Charles Falco that Van Eyck relied on optical devices such as concave mirrors to achieve his realism has been controversial among art historians; David Hockney, *Secret Knowledge* (London: Viking Studio, 2001). See David G. Stork, "Optics and Realism in Renaissance Art," *Scientific American* 291, no. 6 (Dec. 2004): 76–83 and Yvonne Yiu, "The Mirror and Painting in Early Renaissance Texts," in "Optics, Instruments and Painting, 1420–1720: Reflections on the Hockney-Falco Thesis," ed. Sven Dupré, special issue, *Early Science and Medicine* 10, no. 2 (2005): 187–210. Vermeer's use of a camera obscura is more accepted: Arthur K. Wheelock, ed., *Johannes Vermeer*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

18 Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 66.

19 Kahn proposed that symbolist artists or writers look inward for their subject matter: "The essential aim of our art is to objectify the subjective (the externalization of the Idea) instead of subjectifying the objective (nature seen through a temperament)." "Réponse des Symbolistes," *L'Événement* (Sept. 28, 1886). Translated by Herschel B. Chipp, Peter Selz, and Joshua C. Taylor, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 50.

20 Deborah Franklin, "How Hospital Gardens Help Patients Heal," *Scientific American*, Mar. 1, 2012, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/nature-that-nurtures/. Citing a 1995, study, Franklin notes: "Tree-bordered vistas of fountains or other water features, along with lush, multilayered greenery of mature trees and flowering plants, appealed most. Those results are consistent with Ulrich's findings of the healing power of a 'window view' and also correspond with the theories of evolutionary biologists that people prefer views that are reminiscent of the savannas where humans evolved. Throughout human history, trees and water have signaled an oasis, and flowering plants have been a sign of possible food. Open views deter surprises by predators, and shaded alcoves offer a safe retreat." Calls for improved hospital design based on these principles continue to this day: Druv Khullar, MD, "Bad Hospital Design Is Making Us Sicker," *New York Times*, Feb. 22, 2017.

21 Leon Battista Alberti, *Ten Books on Architecture* (1486), quoted in Ernst H. Gombrich, "The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape," in *Norm and Form* (London: Phaidon, 1966), 111.

22 Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting*, quoted in Gombrich, "Renaissance Theory of Art," 111–12.

23 A quote attributed to Michelangelo but penned by Francisco de Hollanda, a Portuguese in Rome in the 1540s, who makes a similar essentialist argument for Flemish pictures: "In Flanders they paint with a view to external exactness or such things as may cheer you and of which you cannot speak ill, as for example saints and prophets. They paint stuffs and masonry, the green grass of the fields, the shadow of trees, and rivers and bridges, which they call landscapes, with many figures on this side and many figures on that. And all this, though it pleases some persons, is done without reason or art." Francisco de Hollanda, *Four Dialogues on Painting*, trans. Aubrey F. G. Bell (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 16; quoted by Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 19–21.

24 Domenicus Lampsonius, *Pictorum aliquot celebrium Germaniae Inferioris effigies* (Antwerp: Apud Viduam Hieronymi Cock, 1572), quoted in Gombrich, "Renaissance Theory of Art," 115.

25 Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), trans. S. G. C. Middlemore, 2 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1878). See Krul, "Realism, Renaissance and Nationalism," 253–56.

26 Ernst H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 38–39. See also Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

27 John Constable, letter to Rev. Fisher, Nov. 2, 1823, "A sketch (of a picture) will not serve more than one state of mind & will not serve to drink at again & again—in a sketch there is nothing but the one state of mind—that which you were in at the time." In R. B. Beckett, ed., *John Constable's Correspondence VI: The Fishers* (Suffolk: Suffolk Records Society, 1968), 142.

28 Charles Baudelaire's poem "Correspondances" in *Les fleurs du mal* (Paris: Poulet-Malassis and de Broise, 1857) is a foundational text for symbolist aesthetics. In his *L'art romantique*, Baudelaire insisted that "We cannot but arrive at this truth that everything is a hieroglyph..."; translated by H. R. Rookmaaker, *Gauguin and Nineteenth Century Art Theory* (Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1972), 288. For Poe, see John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 11 and *passim*.

29 Adrian Ludwig Richter (1803–84), quoted in Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art: From Winckelmann to Baudelaire*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2000), 272.

30 Renaissance figures such as Alberti and Albrecht Dürer invented their own hieroglyphs; see Erik Iversen, "Hieroglyphic Studies of the Renaissance," *Burlington Magazine* 100, no. 658 (Jan. 1958): 15–21 and *The Myth of Egypt and Its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1961). The Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher believed that he could decipher the hieroglyphs through intuition; see his *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (Rome: V. Mascardi, 1652–54); also Iversen, *Myth of Egypt*, 93–99.

31 Ann Jensen Adams, "Competing Communities in the 'Great Bog of Europe': Identity and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting," in Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, 35–76.

32 David Nicholas, *Medieval Flanders* (London: Longman, 1992), 8.

33 Mitchell, *Landscape and Power*, vii.

34 Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 182.

35 Email correspondence with James Marrow, Jeffrey Hamburger, Nancy Netzer, and Christian Dupont, May 5, 2017.

36 Gombrich, "Renaissance Theory of Art," 108.

37 Edward Norgate, *Miniatura, or the Art of Limning* (c. 1650), ed. Martin Hardie (Oxford: Clarendon, 1919), 45–46, quoted in Gombrich, "Renaissance Theory of Art," 116: "The first occasion, as I have bene told abroad, was thus. A Gentleman of Antwerpe being a great *Liefhebber* (Virtuoso or Lover of Art) returning from a long Journey he had made about the Countrey of Liege and Forrest of Ardenna, comes to visit his old freind, an ingenious painter of that Citie, whose House and Company he useually frequented. The Painter he finds at his Easill—at worke which he very dilligently intends, while his newcome freind, walking by, recountes the adventures of his long Journey, and with all what Cities he saw, what beautifill prospects he beheld in a Country of a strange scitiation, full of Alpine Rocks, old Castles, and extraordinary buildings &c. With which relation (growing long) the prompt and ready Painter was soe delighted as, unregarded by his walking freind, he layes by his worke, and on a new Table begins to paint what the other spake, describing his description in a more legible and lasting Character then the others words....The Gentleman...was astonisht with wonder to see those places and that Countrey soe lively exprest by the Painter as if hee had seene with his eyes or bene his Companion in the Journey. This first Esay at Lanscape it seemes got the painter Crownes and Credit. This began others to imitate, and now the Art is growne to that perfection."

38 Hildegard van de Velde, Nico van Hout, and Elise Boutsen, *The Sky Is the Limit: Landscape in the Low Countries*, exh. cat. (Antwerp: Rockoxhuis; Dresden: Gemaldegalerie Alte Meister, 2017), 78.

39 Hans Vlieghe, *Flemish Art and Architecture, 1585–1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

40 John Rupert Martin, "The Baroque from the Point of View of the Art Historian," in *Readings in Art History*, ed. Harold Spencer, vol. 2 (New York: Scribner's, 1969), 176; Martin notes that "It is not too much to say that the consciousness of infinity pervades the whole epoch and colors all its products."

41 Larry Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes: The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 9–10. "Historically, we can consider the relationship of the new genres and their favorite themes, especially landscapes and peasants, to issues of ultimate cultural significance in the historical circumstances of sixteenth-century Antwerp—namely, burgeoning urbanism and capitalism in their transformations of religion and morality away from a meditative and essentially monastic ideal to a serious engagement with various forms of worldly temptations....Representations of familiar yet alien persons (peasants, beggars) and spaces (rural fields or mountain peaks) form a pictorial laboratory for urban, prosperous art buyers to measure themselves."

42 Joris van Grieken, Ger Luijten, and Jan van der Stock, *Hieronymus Cock: The Renaissance in Print* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). See also Christopher P. Heuer, "Hieronymus Cock's Aesthetic of Collapse," in "Mal'Occhio: Looking Awry at the Renaissance," ed. Patricia Rubin and Maria Loh, special issue, *Oxford Art Journal* 32, no. 3 (2009): 387, 389–408.

43 Alexandra Onuf, "Small Landscapes in Seventeenth-Century Antwerp," *Burlington Magazine* 150, no. 1260 (Mar. 2008): 190–93.

44 Boudewijn Bakker and Michael Hoyle, "Pictores, Adeste! Hieronymus Cock Recommending His Print Series," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 33, no. 1/2 (2007–08): 53–66.

45 Stewart Ziff, "Beyond the Context: Landscapes, Pictures, and the Epistemology of Image-Making," *Leonardo* 28, no. 5 (1995): 437–39.

46 Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes*, 10–11. "Our current thinking about art offers a contradiction between two main approaches. The first, more traditional approach, perhaps best theorized in George Kubler's *The Shape of Time*, sees art as a sequence of original creations, what Kubler calls 'prime objects.' These 'key monuments' are what art historians usually assign critical weight to and inscribe in what has come to be called the 'canon.' These

are the works that give rise to the imitations and knock-offs that we usually call 'artistic influence.' The greater the influence, the greater the major monument, or so the argument usually goes. The other, more currently fashionable poststructural approach situates art works as collaborative creations, conditioned by social and cultural conventions and constraints, not to mention a constellation of materials, markets, and other elements of production that condition any manufacture and distribution. In this view, the art work more closely resembles a published book, where author and publisher, let alone distributor, are all part of the process; perhaps an even more collaborative modern art form would be the studio motion picture, with participants too numerous to mention. A film gives 'credits' to a whole host of co-producers and individual technicians as well as to actors and a guiding director, who sometimes is given special credit as an 'auteur,' despite the constraints and collaborations of studio production. By this reckoning, the print produced in Antwerp by Cock is closer than an easel painting to a modern book or movie, but even there we have to take account of replication and the workshop production line of designers, engravers, and distributors, not to mention the overall structure of guild, market, and urban audience who are in dialogue with the production of the images."

47 Peter Parshall, "Art and the Theater of Knowledge: The Origins of Print Collecting in Northern Europe," *Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin* 2, no. 3 (Spring 1994): 7–36.

48 Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes*, 4, quotes Dürer's warning.

49 See *Albert Dürer aux Pays-Bas: Son voyage (1520–1521), son influence*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts; Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1977).

50 Luuk Pijl, "Een Val van Icarus van Paul Bril en diens artistieke relaties met Hans Bol, Lodewijk Toeput en Jan Brueghel de Oude," *Oud Holland* 110, no. 2 (1996): 70–78.

51 This was one of a series of prints produced after his series of Large Landscapes, which featured designs by Pieter Bruegel. This 1558 series was titled *Landscapes with Biblical and Mythological Scenes*. Larry Silver notes that these prints were created after drawings by his brother Matthijs Cock, published with a Dutch title that read: "Various sorts of landscapes with fine histories composed therein, from the Old and New Testaments, and several merry Poems, very convenient for painters and other connoisseurs of the arts." Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes*, 6. Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York: New American Library, 1960), 221.

52 According to Christopher Braider, "Our own reading of Icarus as an allegory of the Death of Allegory is itself a de Manian 'allegory of reading': the picture changes subjects, becoming about the trouble we have making out what exactly it is about." Christopher Braider, "*Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*: The Death of Allegory and the Discovery of the World in the Elder Pieter Bruegel," in *Refiguring the Real: Picture and Modernity in Word and Image, 1400–1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 97–98.

53 Walter S. Gibson, *"Mirror of the Earth": The Flemish World Landscape of the Sixteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

54 The dramatic split in this escarpment, named for the mythic horse of the son of Charlemagne, has been exaggerated by the demolitions of the troops of Louis XIV in the seventeenth century.

55 Bruegel's trip to Italy and the Alps gave him much new material for his art, which became extremely influential. See Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes*, 162–64.

56 Alastair Fowler, "Brueghel's *Hunters in the Snow*," *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 34, no. 1 (Fall 2014): 14 notes that the winter of "1564–65 was the first of the severe winters that began the so-called Little Ice Age (although worse was to come in 1607–1608 and especially in 1676–1725). In 1564, the Sheldt [*sic*] froze 2 feet thick."

57 Michael Collins, "The Ground Glass: Landscape Art, the Camera Obscura and Photography," *Picturing Places*, British Library, Apr. 6, 2017, https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/the-ground-glass-landscape-art-the-camera-obscura-and-photography-coll-items-missing.

58 Walter S. Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

59 Larry Silver, "Forest Primeval: Albrecht Altdorfer and the German Wilderness Landscape," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 13, no. 1 (1983): 4–43.

60 Kristina Hartzer Nguyen, "The Made Landscape: City and Country in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Prints," *Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 1–3, 5, 7–47.

61 Claudette Sarlet, *Les écrivains d'art en Belgique, 1860–1914* (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 1992), 20.

62 Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927).

63 See also William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape: To Which is Added a Poem, on Landscape Painting* (London: R. Blamire, 1792).

64 By the nineteenth century, *schilderachtig* was used to mean "picturesque"; see Boudewijn Bakker, "*Schilderachtig*: Discussions of a Seventeenth-Century Term and Concept," *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 23, no. 2/3 (1995): 147–62.

65 *Le romantisme en Belgique: Entre réalités, rêves et souvenirs*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Racine, 2005).

66 *Le romantisme en Belgique*, 112.

67 Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 38–39.

68 William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," in *Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (London: Biggs and Cottle for T. N. Longman, 1798), 207.

69 See M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Evolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971). The theme of "Religion after the Age of Reason" was a section of the exhibition *The Critique of Reason: Romantic Art, 1760–1860* at the Yale University Art Gallery and Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, March 6–July 26, 2015.

70 The literature on the sublime is vast; see Jan Blanc, "Sensible Natures: Allart van Everdingen and the Tradition of Sublime Landscape in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 8, no. 2 (Summer 2016), doi:10.5092/jhna.2016.8.2.4 for the early history of the sublime in Northern art. For the eighteenth century, see Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993). Also, Hugh Honour, *Romanticism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979) and Bryan Jay Wolf, *Romantic Re-Vision: Culture and Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century American Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

71 Jules Du Jardin, *L'art flamand: La renaissance du XIX^e siècle*, vol. 4 (Brussels: Arthur Boite, 1898), 153–56.

72 Nicole Craenhals and Pierre-Paul Dupont, *Le chant du pays, ou La mouvance de la lumière dans la peinture belge de 1830–1930*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Galerie Maurice Tzwern, 2000), 42–43.

73 *Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles: 275 ans d'enseignement*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Crédit Communal, 1987), 89, 135.

74 Jean F. Buyck, "Antwerp, *Als Ik Kan*, and the Problem of Provincialism," in *Belgian Art, 1880–1914*, exh. cat. (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 1980), 71.

75 Robert Hoozee and Monique Tahon-Vanroose, eds., *Het landschap in de belgische kunst, 1830–1913*, exh. cat. (Ghent: Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 1980), 313. See also Dominique Marechal, "Théodore Fourmois (1814–1871): Pionier van het negentiende-eeuwse pleinairisme in België," *Jaarboek Stad Brugge Stedelijke Musea* (1987–88): 205–16.

76 Dominique Marechal, "Théodore Fourmois," in *Le romantisme en Belgique*, 113.

77 The earliest modern exhibition of the works of the School of Tervuren was organized by André A. Moerman, *De School van Tervuren* (Tervuren: Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Africa, 1967). The most recent exhibition featuring these artists was Craenhals and Dupont, *Le chant du pays*.

78 Elise Gilles, "L'École de Tervueren: La part du réel," *Koregos: Revue et Encyclopédie Multimédia des Arts* (Dec. 12, 2016), http://www.koregos.org/fr/elise-gilles-lecole-de-tervueren-la-part-du-reel/.

79 Camille Lemonnier, "Les artistes belges: Les peintres de Tervueren," *L'Art Universel* (Brussels) 2, no. 18 (Nov. 5, 1874): 250–51.

80 Steven Adams, *The Barbizon School and the Origins of Impressionism* (London: Phaidon, 1994).

81 Ronald Pickvance and Richard Brettell, *Gauguin and the School of Pont-Aven*, exh. cat. (London: Apollo, 2014).

82 William H. Gerdts, *Monet's Giverny: An Impressionist Colony* (New York: Abbeville, 1993).

83 Katharina Groth and Björn Herrmann, eds., *Mythos und Moderne: 125 Jahre Künstlerkolonie Worpswede*, exh. cat. (Cologne: Wienand, 2014).

84 Renate Ulmer, ed., *Art nouveau: Symbolismus und Jugendstil in Frankreich*, exh. cat. (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche, 1999).

85 Anne Mochon, *Gabriele Münter, between Munich and Murnau*, exh. cat. (Cambridge: Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University, 1980).

86 Lise Svanholm, *Northern Light: The Skagen Painters* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2004).

87 The literature on the Hudson River School is vast; notable studies include: Kynaston McShine, ed., *The National Paradise: Painting in America 1800–1950*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976) (with essays by Barbara Novak, Robert Rosenblum, and John Wilmerding), Robert Christadler, "Romantic Landscape Painting in America: History as Nature, Nature as History," in *American Icons: Transatlantic Perspectives on Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century American Art*, ed. Thomas W. Gaehtgens and Heinz Ickstadt (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and Humanities, 1992), 93–118, and Richard H. Gassan, "The Revolution of Seeing: Tourism and the Founding of the Hudson River School," in *The Birth of American Tourism: New York, the Hudson Valley, and American Culture, 1790–1835* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 52–69.

88 Artists who painted at Anseremme included Félicien Rops (1833–98) and Charles Hermans (1839–1924).

89 Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, "Une 'école verviétoise' de peinture? Les réalités d'un mythe," in *Georges Le Brun (1873–1914): Maître de l'intime*, ed. Véronique Carpiaux and Denis Laoureux, exh. cat. (Paris: LienArt; Namur: Musée Félicien Rops, 2015), 91–99.

90 See Piet Boyens, *Flemish Art: Symbolism to Expressionism at Sint-Martens-Latem* (Tielt: Lannoo; Sint-Martens-Latem: Art Book, 1992) and his *In de voetsporen van de Latemse Kunstenaars* (Ghent/Amsterdam: Ludion, 2003).

91 Paul Colin, *La peinture belge depuis 1830* (Brussels: Éditions des Cahiers de Belgique, 1930), 153–66.

92 Max Nordau blamed urban life for a host of psychological and medical problems; *Degeneration by Max Nordau: Translated from the Second Edition of the German Work* (New York: D. Appleton, 1895). This criticism was continued by the sociologist Georg Simmel in his 1903 book *Die und das Geistesleben* (*The Metropolis and Mental Life*). See Gill Perry, "Primitivism and the 'Modern,'" in *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century*, Charles Harrison, Francis Frascina, and Gill Perry (New Haven: Yale University Press and the Open University, 1993), 35.

93 Colin, *La peinture belge depuis 1830*, 131–39.

94 Colin, 134.

95 Craenhals and Dupont, *Le chant du pays*, 47.

96 Hoozee and Tahon-Vanroose, *Het landschap in de belgische kunst*, 132.

97 Craenhals and Dupont, *Le chant du pays*, 54.

98 "Salon d'Anvers (Suite)," *Journal des Beaux-Arts et de la Littérature* (Brussels) 18 (Sept. 30, 1876): 142. Quoted by Gilles, "L'École de Tervueren."

99 Paul Colin called Crépin the "liaison entre Tervueren et l'Impressionnisme." Colin, *La peinture belge depuis 1830*, 143. This work is reproduced on that page.

100 Hoozee and Tahon-Vanroose, *Het landschap in de belgische kunst*, 154.

101 Gustave Courbet, quoted by Edgar Monteil in Georges Riat, *Gustave Courbet, peintre* (Paris: H. Floury, 1906), 255. "Pour peindre un pays, il faut le connaître. Moi, je connais mon pays, je le peins."

102 Jean-Philippe Huys and Dominique Marechal, "Realism: From *Living Art* to *Free Art*," in *Courbet: Mapping Realism; Paintings from the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and American Collections*, ed. Jeffery Howe (Chestnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2013), 21–27.

103 Dominique Marechal, "Belgium and the Netherlands through the Eyes of Courbet," in Howe, *Courbet: Mapping Realism*, 29–37.

104 See Robert Hoozee, "Le réalisme: Courbet en Belgique," in *Paris–Bruxelles/Bruxelles–Paris: Réalisme, impressionnisme, symbolisme, art nouveau; Les relations artistiques entre la France et la Belgique, 1848–1914*, ed. Anne Pingeot and Robert Hoozee (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 1997), 153.

105 Clark, *Landscape into Art*, 22.

106 Craenhals and Dupont, *Le chant du pays*, 76.

107 The abbey of the Rouge-Cloître dates back to 1366. It was here that the fifteenth-century artist Hugo van der Goes (1430/40–82) was taken after his mental breakdown in 1482. To cure him of his melancholic depression, the monks tried to rouse him with music. This was the subject of a famous painting by Emile Wauters (1846–1933) in 1872. Wauters combined the romantic interest in psychology and the role of insanity in artistic creativity in this haunting vision. It was a painting that many found very moving; Vincent van Gogh confided to his brother Theo in a letter from Arles on October 21, 1888: "As a matter of fact, I am again pretty nearly reduced to the madness of Hugo van der Goes in Emile Wauters's picture. And if it were not that I have almost a double nature, that of a monk and that of a painter, as it were, I should have been reduced, and that long ago, completely and utterly, to the aforesaid condition." *Vincent van Gogh: The Letters*, no. 709, http://vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let709/letter.html.

108 Craenhals and Dupont, *Le chant du pays*, 170. An early monograph on T'Scharner is by Edmond de Bruyn, *Théodore T'Scharner, 14 février 1826–30 octobre 1906* (Brussels: G. van Oest, 1908).

109 These drawings are regrettably lost, although several are reproduced in De Bruyn, *Théodore T'Scharner*. See J. J. F. Haine and Jan Albert Goris, "A Belgian in the Gold Rush: California Indians; A Memoir by Dr. J. J. F. Haine," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (June 1959): 141–42.

110 Craenhals and Dupont, *Le chant du pays*, 136.

111 Hoozee and Tahon-Vanroose, *Het landschap in de belgische kunst*, 86.

112 Colin, *La peinture belge depuis 1830*, 44. "Il a réussi, avec une économie de moyens...à noter le visage de certains coins délaissés de la banlieue d'Anvers et à rendre sensible leur beauté pauvre et silencieuses."

113 Craenhals and Dupont, *Le chant du pays*, 40.

114 Edouard Huberti (1818–80), Belgian artist.

115 Jules Du Jardin, *L'art flamand: Les artistes contemporains*, vol 6. (Brussels: Arthur Boite, 1900), 130–31. "En peinture, je n'ai été l'élève de personne, écrit l'artiste; je n'ai commencé à tâter de la peinture qu'en 1873, après mon mariage....J'étais et suis encore attaché au Ministère des chemins de fer, administration des télégraphes, où j'ai fait toute ma carrière: je suis aujourd'hui inspecteur de direction.

"Je cumulais donc: fonctionnaire durant la semaine, peintre le dimanche. C'est en 1876 que je me risquai par pure fantaisie à envoyer deux œuvres au salon triennal de Bruxelles, me résignant d'avance à les voir refusées. Elles furent reçues, bien placées et des journaux en parlèrent! Pensez si j'étais ravi...et étonné...

"Une dizaine d'années après, je me mis à essayer aussi de l'aquarelle et fus presque aussitôt nommé membre effectif de la Société royale belge des Aquarellistes, où je remplaçai Huberti qui venait de mourir. Je n'aime pas à parler de mes succès, mais je dois dire que j'en ai eu beaucoup; je puis dire même que j'ai été un des enfants gâtés de la critique d'art, de la presse en général: j'ai été encouragé par d'innombrables articles, qui m'ont été un stimulant précieux..."

116 Letter from Frans Binjé to Octave Maus in response to a referendum on the value of painting in watercolor, reproduced in Aron, *La Belgique artistique et littéraire*, 192–94. Translated on web page of Thomas Deprez Fine Arts, http://www.thomasdeprezfinearts.com/franz-binje-sur-le-rail.

117 Emile Verhaeren, "Le Salon de 1884," *La Jeune Belgique* 3, no. 8 (July–Aug. 1884): 483. "Binjé, au contraire, est tout habile et tout entier conquis au charme intime des talus herbeux, des chemins dévalants, des lisières de bois, des fourrés en gradins, à l'air vaporeux, fluide, mouvant, aux mousselines des brouillards, aux gazes de buées, à la nature entrevue par Corot, dont les nymphes sont les âmes. Certes, cette vision des sites n'est en rien épique et grandiose; mais elle est si reposante, si recueillante, si douce, si tentante aux heures de fatigue et de contemplation finie! Il est des tableautins de Binjé qu'on voudrait avoir toujours devant les yeux—éloge rare!"

118 Fernand Khnopff, "Studio-Talk Brussels," *Studio* 20, no. 88 (July 1900): 123, 125–26.

119 Fernand Khnopff, "Studio-Talk Brussels," *Studio* 22, no. 98 (May 1901): 285.

120 See Huys and Marechal, "Realism: From *Living Art* to *Free Art*."

121 Madeleine Octave Maus, *Trente années de la lutte pour l'art* (1926) (Brussels: Librairie l'oiseau bleu, 1980), Jane Block, *Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism, 1868–1894* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984).

122 Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque et al., eds., *Les XX et la Libre esthétique: Honderjaar later/Cent ans après*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, 1993).

123 See Colin, *La peinture belge depuis 1830*, 276–77.

124 See Buyck, "Antwerp, *Als Ik Kan*, and the Problem of Provincialism," 71–80.

125 Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 1298. "Il n'y a pas de peuple belge, proprement dit. Il y a des races flamandes et wallonnes, et il y a des villes ennemies. Voyez Anvers."

126 Serge Goyens de Heusch, "Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism and Luminism in Belgium," in *Impressionism to Symbolism: The Belgian Avant-Garde 1880–1900*, ed. Mary Anne Stevens and Robert Hoozee (London: Royal Academy of Arts; Ghent: Ludion, 1994), 30–39.

127 Hoozee and Tahon-Vanroose, *Het landschap in de belgische kunst*, 222.

128 "Museum zoekt nog kunstwerken Camille Wauters voor hommage," *Gazette van Antwerpen*, Feb. 28, 2000, http://www.gva.be/cnt/oid81633/archief-museum-zoekt-nog-kunstwerken-camille-wauters-voor-hommage.

129 Hoozee and Tahon-Vanroose, *Het landschap in de belgische kunst*, 186.

130 Celebrated on August 15 in Antwerp, in contrast to the rest of Belgium that celebrates on the second Sunday in May, following the later US example. See "Morgen 100ste Moederdag," *Gazette van Antwerpen*, Aug. 14, 2013, http://www.gva.be/cnt/aid1435755/vandaag-100ste-moederdag.

131 Johan De Smet, *Emile Claus, 1849–1924*, exh. cat. (Ghent: Snoek-Decaju & Zoon; Antwerp: Pandora, 1997), 7, 9.

132 Emile Verhaeren, "Chronique artistique: L'exposition des XX," *La Jeune Belgique* 5, no. 3 (Mar. 1886): 185. "Une nouvelle entente de la vie naquit, et dès lors l'antique et double préoccupation de la *ligne* et de la *couleur* s'évanouit et il ne resta plus que l'unique et splendide étude de la *lumière agissante*. Agissante, car c'est elle désormais qui commande dans le tableau. Elle détermine l'apparence des objets, leur forme, leurs arêtes que tour à tour elle ronge, infléchit, exagère. Elle fait la couleur qu'elle émiette en tons variés à l'infini, gammés ou brusques, éclatants ou assourdis. *L'ombre*, qui dans la plupart des tableaux anciens n'est qu'une masse noire opaque, s'illumine également, devient transparente, vivante, teintée."

133 Emile Verhaeren, "The Art Movement: Current Art in Belgium," *Magazine of Art* 22 (July 1898): 499.

134 Boyens, *Flemish Art*, 20.

135 Boyens, 19.

136 Alison Hokanson, "The Soul of Solemn Places: The Interior Scenes of Henri De Braekeleer (1840–1888)" (PhD diss., New York University, 2013); Alison Hokanson, "The Soul of Things: Henri De Braekeleer as a Forerunner of the Treatment of Light in Belgian Symbolism," in *Light and Obscurity in Symbolism*, ed. Rosina Neginsky and Deborah Cibelli (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2016), 156–74.

137 P. de Mont, "Frans van Leemputten," *Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift* 5 (1896): 105–25.

138 Craenhals and Dupont, *Le chant du pays*, 190.

139 Craenhals and Dupont, 209.

140 Fernand Khnopff, "Studio-Talk Brussels," *Studio* 12, no. 56 (Nov. 1897): 127.

141 Maurice Maeterlinck, preface to *Sept essais d'Emerson*, trans. I. Will (Mlle. Mali) (Brussels: P. Lacomblez, 1894), v–xviii. See also David LaRocca and Ricardo Miguel-Alfonso, eds., *A Power to Translate the World: New Essays on Emerson and International Culture* (Hanover: Dartmouth College Press, 2015), and Hamilton Osgood, "Maeterlinck and Emerson," *Arena* 15 (1896): 563–73.

142 Lisa Smit, review of *Jan Toorop: Songs of Our Times*, Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 15, no. 3 (Fall 2016), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/autumn16/smit-reviews-jan-toorop.

143 *Belgian Art, 1880–1914*, 126–27.

144 Rob van Ginkel, "Contextualizing Marine Resource Use: A Case from the Netherlands," in "The Importance of Context in Common Pool Resource Research," ed. Victoria M. Edwards and Nathalie A. Steins, special issue, *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning* 1, no. 3 (Nov. 1999): 223–33, doi:10.1002/(SICI)1522-7200(199911)1:3<223::AID-JEPP25>3.0.CO;2-Y. Van Ginkel explains: "Before 1870, the number of marketed oys-

ters hardly ever exceeded one million specimens. By 1875 it was approximately 35 million. Still, supply could not keep up with demand, prices remained high and investors in the industry made considerable profits. Many were attracted to the oyster industry and at ensuing public auctions of plots the lease fees skyrocketed because prospective lessees began outbidding each other to gain access. Capital replaced labor as the most important factor of production. By 1886 nothing remained of the free oyster fishery."

145 Henk De Smaele, "Agrarisch Vlaanderen en industrieel Wallonië," in *Rechts Vlaanderen: Religie en stemgedrag in negentiende-eeuws België* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2009), 322. In Flanders, only Ghent could compare to the industrialized Walloon cities.

146 Fernand Khnopff, "François Maréchal, a Liège Etcher," *Studio* 20, no. 88 (July 1900): 102–7.

147 *Belgian Art, 1880–1914*, 120.

148 Sura Levine and Françoise Urban, *Hommage à Constantin Meunier, 1831–1905* (Antwerp: Galerie Maurice Tzwern/Pandora, 1998). Fernand Khnopff, "A Great Belgian Sculptor: Constantin Meunier," *Studio* 35, no. 147 (June 1905): 3–11.

149 Letter 610 (Oct. 8, 1889), translated by Mrs. Johanna van Gogh-Bonger, in *The Complete Letters of Van Gogh*, ed. Robert Harrison, vol. 3 (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1978), 222.

150 See Eugenia W. Herbert, *The Artist and Social Reform: France and Belgium, 1885–1898* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

151 Joy Newton, "Whistler and La Société des Vingt," *Burlington Magazine* 143, no. 1181 (Aug. 2001): 480–88.

152 Susan M. Canning, "The Symbolist Landscapes of Henry van de Velde," in "Symbolist Art and Literature," ed. Sharon L. Hirsh, special issue, *Art Journal* 45, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 130–36.

153 *Belgian Art, 1880–1914*, 117–19.

154 Vincent Vanhamme, *Xavier Mellery: L'âme des choses* (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2000). See also *Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles*, 199–202.

155 Du Jardin, *L'art flamand*, 6:62. "Mais, partant en voyage comme prix de Rome, dès mes premiers pas, à Cologne déjà, je recommençai à suivre la nature, reproduisant les émotions imprévues que je rencontrais, la peignant avec religion, culte de la nature que je nourris encore, car l'âme des choses est si forte qu'un galérien devant un mur peut en faire sortir un poème."

156 Du Jardin, 6:63. "Charles De Coster...me proposa d'illustrer son *Ile de Marken*, écrite pour le *Tour du Monde*. J'acceptai sa proposition et emportai aussi ma boîte à couleurs. De Coster déjà malade mourut pendant mon séjour dans l'île. J'en fus très touché, car, quoique ne l'ayant connu qu'un instant, sa narration de l'île de Marken et du pays qu'il m'avait fait connaître, me l'avait fait aimer et j'aurais voulu le revoir. Je pris des documents pour la série de dessins qu'il m'avait demandés. Je fis aussi des peintures, soit d'intérieurs, soit d'après des habitants. Je passai plus de deux mois dans l'île sans en sortir. Cette île, située comme au bout du monde, dans le Zuiderzée, avec ses mœurs patriarcales, ses intérieurs et ses coutumes des plus pittoresques, me donnait des impressions vraies de joies qui, sans être profondes, étaient bien du domaine de l'art."

157 Robert Hoozee, "James Ensor's Vision of Nature," in Pingeot and Hoozee, *Paris–Bruxelles/Bruxelles–Paris*, 102–13.

158 Fernand Khnopff, "A Belgian Painter: Léon Frederic," *Studio* 40, no. 169 (Apr. 1907): 170–81. Also, Octave Maus, "Léon Frédéric," *Art et Décoration* (Jan.–June 1901): 141–52. See also Linda Nochlin, "Léon Frederic and *The Stages of the Worker's Life*," *Arts Magazine* 55, no. 4 (Dec. 1980): 137–43; and Rodolphe Rapetti, "Léon Frédéric et *Les âges de l'ouvrier*: Symbolisme et messianisme social dans la Belgique de Léopold II," *La Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France* 40, no. 2 (1990): 136–45.

159 Among others, Xavier Mellery, *L'Ardenne*, n.d., Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 3909; Georges Le Brun, *L'Automne en Xhoffraix*, 1899, illustrated in Carpiaux and Laoureux, *Georges Le Brun*, 14; and Auguste Donnay, *Panorama of the Valley of the Ourthe*, Musées de Verviers, illustrated in Denis Laoureux and Claire Leblanc, eds., *Paysages de Belgique: Un voyage artistique, 1830–2015*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Racine, 2015), 20.

160 The title of this work is taken from the Czech reformer Jan Roháč z Dubé; see Rapetti, "Léon Frédéric et *Les âges de l'ouvrier*," esp. 144.

161 Baudelaire, "Correspondances"; see Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: Univer-

sity of California Press, 1994), 10–11.

162 Khnopff, "Léon Frederic," 172–74.

163 Khnopff, 176–80.

164 Denis Laoureux, ed., *William Degouve de Nuncques: Maître du mystère,* exh. cat. (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2012).

165 *Peintres de l'imaginaire: Symbolistes et surréalistes belges,* exh. cat. (Brussels: Laconti, 1972), 19–21. Henri De Groux (1867–1930) was the son of the painter Charles De Groux. Degouve de Nuncques posed for Henri's *Le Christ aux Outrages* of 1892.

166 [Emile Verhaeren], "Le Salon de la Libre esthétique," *L'Art Moderne* 14, no. 14 (Apr. 8, 1894): 109: "...le Canal et la Maison aveugle pourraient servir d'illustration très belle à quelque conte d'Edgard [*sic*] Poe." Laoureux, *William Degouve de Nuncques,* 101, notes that Degouve de Nuncques copied Baudelaire's translation of Poe's *The Raven* in one of his sketchbooks.

167 Luc and Paul Haesaerts, quoted by Francine-Claire Legrand, *Symbolism in Belgium* (Brussels: Laconti, 1972), 207.

168 See Lee Hendrix, *Noir: The Romance of Black in 19th-Century French Drawings and Prints* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2016).

169 See especially Jacques Marx, "Le paysage verhaerenien dans l'idéologie nationale," in Billen and Versele, *La construction des paysages nationaux,* 21–56.

170 Georges Rodenbach, *Le miroir de ciel natale* (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1898), 66. "Ah! ces voix du pays! ces rappels du passé! Tant de reflets enfuis dans un miroir cassé!"

171 Dominique Marechal, "Eternity Reflected Motionless in the Water: Fernand Khnopff; From Bruges to Fosset," in *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921),* ed. Frederik Leen, Dominique Marechal, Sophie van Vliet et al., exh. cat. (Brussels: Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, 2004), 35–44.

172 Albert Alhadeff, "George Minne, Maeterlinck's *fin de siècle* Illustrator," *Annales de la Fondation Maurice Maeterlinck* 12 (1966): 7–42; "George Minne, *fin de siècle* Drawings and Sculpture" (PhD diss., New York University, 1972); "The Great Awakening: *Le Milieu Belge,*" *Arts Magazine* 55, no. 4 (Dec. 1980): 132–36.

173 Lemonnier, *La Belgique,* 260–63.

174 Fernand Khnopff, "Belgian Pen-Drawings," special issue, *Studio* (Winter 1900–01): 180, 182.

175 Anne Adriaens-Pannier and Norbert Hostyn, *Léon Spilliaert* (Brussels: SABAM, 1996). Also, Francine-Claire Legrand, ed., *Léon Spilliaert: Symbol and Expression in 20th Century Belgian Art,* exh. cat. (Washington, DC: Phillips Collection, 1980).

176 Jollivet-Castelot, quoted by Frank Edebau in Legrand, *Leon Spilliaert,* 13.

177 J. W. Gamble, letter of 1915, quoted in Modris Eksteins, *The Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 214.

178 René Magritte, "Les mots et les images," *La Révolution Surréaliste* (Paris) 12 (Dec. 15, 1929): 32–33. Reprinted in Harry Torczyner, *Magritte: Ideas and Images* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977), 88.

179 Torczyner, *Magritte,* 221–22.

180 Quoted in Louis Scutenaire, *Avec Magritte* (Brussels: Lebeer Hossmann, 1977), 90. "Le problème de la fenêtre donna 'La condition humaine.' Je plaçai devant une fenêtre vue de l'intérieur d'une chambre un tableau représentant exactement la partie de paysage masquée par ce tableau. L'arbre représenté sur ce tableau cachait donc l'arbre situé derrière lui, hors de la chambre. Il se trouvait, pour le spectateur, à la fois à l'intérieur de la chambre sur le tableau et à la fois par la pensée à l'extérieur dans le paysage réel. C'est ainsi que nous voyons le monde, nous le voyons à l'extérieur de nous-mêmes et cependant nous n'en avons qu'une représentation en nous."

181 Sarah Whitfield, *Magritte,* exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), no. 58.

# HENRI DE BRAEKELEER AND BELGIAN LANDSCAPE PAINTING IN THE 1870s AND 1880s

Alison Hokanson

The work of Henri De Braekeleer (1840–88) is not an obvious point of departure for an essay on Belgian landscape. The artist, who is largely forgotten today, was in many respects a rather parochial and conservative painter who held himself apart from his cosmopolitan, radical-minded brethren in Brussels.[1] Yet he was celebrated in the second half of the nineteenth century for realist interior scenes set in and around his hometown of Antwerp. Collectors sought after his paintings and progressive Belgian critics praised him for capturing "old neighborhoods, old furnishings, [and] old fabrics... impregnated with mystery and suggestiveness...the superior beauty of...ancient interiors gilded with soft light, similar to shrines or reliquaries."[2] Opinions of him ran so high that he was regularly compared to Vermeer (fig. 1).[3]

1. Henri De Braekeleer, *The Teniersplaats in Antwerp*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 81 x 64 cm, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp, 2998.

De Braekeleer does not seem to have harbored similar ambitions in regard to landscape painting. He engaged in it intermittently and attempted just a handful of large scale compositions. He exhibited his landscapes infrequently, typically at low profile venues, and sold them for modest sums. The subject was, for him, a sideline.[4] However, it is precisely because De Braekeleer was not a leading landscapist that his paintings offer an interesting perspective on the development of the genre in Belgium. Because he was not trying to distinguish himself, the pressures of satisfying critics and the market were diminished. He did not have to push himself to compete in the same manner as he did with his interiors, and could paint for his own edification and enjoyment. As a result, De Braekeleer's landscapes are, ironically, a good barometer of the state of Belgian landscape painting in the 1870s and 1880s. His pictures indicate which innovations in subject matter and method, championed originally by trailblazers in the field, came to be widely accepted among the upper echelons of Belgian artists.

With the exception of some scenes set along the coast and possibly in the south of Belgium, all of De Braekeleer's extant landscape paintings are set in the flat, verdant terrain around Antwerp. He depicted ordinary roads and villages, fields and farms, canals and ponds, and a number of views of Antwerp's harbor, with glimpses of the city's skyline and the soaring spire of the *Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal* (Cathedral of Our Lady). Early in De Braekeleer's career, he portrayed landscape subjects in much the same manner as he did interiors. *The Florist's Garden* of 1864 (fig. 2), one of his rare large landscapes, is meticulously composed and rendered with

2. Henri De Braekeleer, *The Florist's Garden*, 1864. Oil on canvas, 84 x 115 cm, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp, 1203.

a precise, highly detailed technique, bespeaking long hours of planning and execution in the artist's studio. So exacting is the portrayal and so tightly controlled is the organization that the scene exudes the stillness and totalizing vision of a photograph. The apparent fidelity to rendering every last prosaic inch of the humble garden is both poignant and awkward.

De Braekeleer continued to paint interior scenes in much the same mode for the rest of his career, but by 1873 his landscapes were developing in a direction that ran counter to the main body of his work.[5] He began to produce small landscape oils, using a more heavily loaded brush and broader strokes. These pictures are more relaxed in their approach than his interiors, with a sense of animation appropriate to the representation of nature. Some of them are highly resolved compositions, akin in subject and style to the work of the French Barbizon artists, and perhaps especially that of Jean-François Millet, whom was much admired in the Low Countries.[6] Other of De Braekeleer's landscapes, painted mostly on wood, paper, and card, are even more informal in their arrangement and facture (fig. 3). They have the air of paintings done off the cuff, on site, perhaps simply as exercises for the artist's eye and brush, perhaps as something more consciously constituting a "picture," and subsequently signed and sold by De Braekeleer as he saw fit. As none of these loosely handled scenes seem to relate to bigger, more finished paintings, it is likely that he considered them independent works. Indeed, some of the little landscapes appear, set in frames and hung on the walls, in De Braekeleer's studio pictures.[7]

De Braekeleer's methods were rooted in the tradition of plein-air landscape sketching that gained popularity among European artists working in Italy in the early nineteenth century and spread throughout the Continent and to England as appreciation grew for works that reflected artists' initial, direct responses to nature. One good example is Jean-Michel Cels's *Cloud Study*, c. 1838–42 (plate 37). By the time that De Braekeleer was working in the 1870s and 1880s, landscape was rapidly gaining ground as an ideal arena for trying out new approaches to form and color, inspired by the challenge of representing the effects of topography, weather, and light.

Guided, perhaps, by associates like his good friend Jan Stobbaerts, an enthusiastic plein-air painter, De Braekeleer adopted the conception of landscape as a genre in which constraints could be eased and discoveries made—at least as far as his cautious artistic nature would allow. His landscapes generally display a greater degree of experimentation with technique than the interior scenes on which he staked his reputation (although in the mid-1880s the robust, lively style developed in his landscapes begins to emerge in his interiors, suggesting that the two aspects of his practice were converging). Out of doors, without the compositional structure afforded by walls and windows, he kept it small, but used what space he had to explore fresh ways of handling his medium.

3. Henri De Braekeleer, *The Cabaret "Dikke Mee" near Antwerp*, c. 1876. Oil on paper, mounted on canvas, 27 x 34 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 4082.

De Braekeleer's verve is most evident in his depictions of the Scheldt, the river that runs from northeastern France up through Antwerp and then toward the North Sea near Belgium's border with the Netherlands. The vista of the Scheldt around Antwerp, particularly the city's docks and roadstead, where ships ride at anchor, holds an enduring appeal for artists. Many of De Braekeleer's colleagues were drawn to the site, especially after trade duties on the river were abolished in 1863 and the port was transformed into one

of the busiest and most important in Europe (fig. 4). Between 1877 and 1885, the view itself underwent a drastic transformation, as streets and buildings were demolished, canals in-filled or submerged, new quays constructed, and the geography of the river altered to promote commerce. The spectacle of "overflowing life, winged, frenetic, the incessant activity of equipment, the gaiety of the sky and the water singing in the ropes and knocking against the hulls, filling the landscape with perpetual motion," or, alternatively, the calmer sight of the Scheldt "running leaden and somber...the heavy rain clouds scurrying across the autumn sky"[8] attracted painters eager to depict modern life, including two progenitors of impressionism, Eugène Boudin and Johan Barthold Jongkind (fig. 5).[9]

4. Robert Mols (1848–1903), *The Antwerp Waterfront*, 1878. Oil on canvas, 294 x 947 cm, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp, on loan to the Museum aan de Stroom, Antwerp.

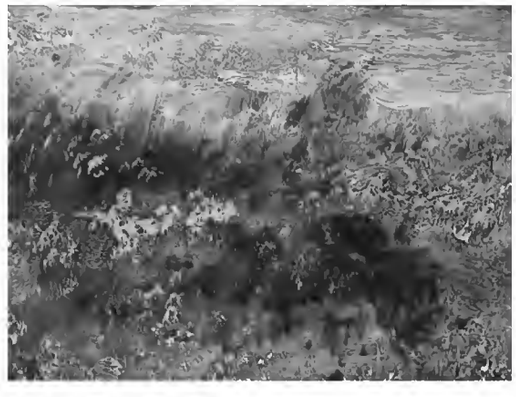
5. Eugène Boudin (1824–98), *Antwerp, Boats on the Scheldt*, 1871. Oil on canvas, 40.3 x 65 cm, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, 1981.1.

Although De Braekeleer reportedly patronized the down-at-the-heels bars around the port,[10] one might suspect that the bustling docks were anathema to him as an artist. More than one critic observed that De Braekeleer was unmoved by the "water, the river, the sea, the ships, the sails, the freighters...the enormous uproar stirring around him" and the "pandemonium of importation...the inharmonious and transitory décor of contemporary Antwerp."[11] However, De Braekeleer did not completely shy away from this side of the city. The views that he painted of Antwerp's harbor show boats clustered along the quays, an occasional steamboat chugging its way across the river, and smoke or steam billowing into the sky (figs. 6–7).[12] He captures the brisk energy of the moment, but without any of the grandiosity that characterizes many depictions of the Scheldt during the era.

The modernity of paintings like the two illustrated views of the Antwerp roadstead resides not only in their subject matter, but also in their handling. Quick, confident, distinct strokes of paint indicate basic shapes and pick out salient details: bright red pennants snapping in the wind, boaters on the water, and the eddying current. De Braekeleer employed a relatively light-toned palette, rich in white and yellow, and eliminated shad-

6. Henri De Braekeleer, *The Antwerp Roadstead*, c. 1875. Oil on wood, 16.5 x 20.5 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 3635.

7. Henri De Braekeleer, *Village on the Scheldt (The Antwerp Roadstead)*, c. 1875. Oil on wood, 31.7 x 40.5 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 3631.



8. Henri De Braekeleer, *Village on the Scheldt (The Antwerp Roadstead)* (detail), c. 1875.

9. Henri De Braekeleer, *The Herentals Canal near Antwerp*, possibly 1865. Etching on paper, 9.5 x 12.3 cm, from Loÿs Delteil, *Leys, De Braekeleer, Ensor* (Boston: Da Capo, 1969), no. 40.

ows, using dark tones largely as accents. He cast aside his strongly articulated perspective for a simple compositional arrangement, treating the sky, cityscape, water, and shoreline as shallow, horizontal bands.

Most striking is the handling of the foreground. Potentially dull stretches of land are transformed through a play of brushwork and color that at times approaches abstraction (fig. 8). The varied, animated strokes, so different from De Braekeleer's usual style, are a painterly equivalent to the artist's landscape prints, which are typically about the size of index cards, yet rich in graphic invention (fig. 9). In no other genre did he so successfully convey a sense of movement, rapid perception, and the pure pleasure of painting.

De Braekeleer's Scheldt scenes attest to the growing acceptance in Belgium of a sketch-like aesthetic and a broadening conception of what constituted a "finished" painting—notions that took a radical turn in the work of the impressionists beginning in the late 1860s. That some Belgian critics of the 1880s were a bit behind the curve is indicated by one writer's response to a seaside view, painted in a similar style to the Scheldt scenes, which De Braekeleer exhibited with Antwerp's *Cercle artistique* in 1882. "At the entrance [of the exhibition] is a study: H. De Braekeleer, *View of Heist*. An empty beach, abandoned by the sea; some beached fishing boats, painted in warm tones, add a black accent to the slightly chalky ensemble of the sand, the ocean, and the buildings on the embankment. It is not yet a *tableau*, but it is more than an impression...what is it?"[13]

The reviewer cast about to find a term that adequately described De Braekeleer's picture: a study, a *tableau* (a carefully staged and completed composition), or an impression, before admitting defeat. The character of the painting simply did not fit within the aesthetic categories known to the writer. This suggests that, as unexceptional as De Braekeleer's approach to landscape may seem today, in Belgium in the 1880s, it represented a challenge to convention. The nation's artists were outpacing its critics.

Situating De Braekeleer's river views precisely in relation to impressionism is a tricky proposition. The dating of his landscapes is problematic and has not been examined since the 1980s.[14] Moreover, his familiarity with the revolutionary artistic and intellectual trends that defined the end of the nineteenth century has not been securely established. In general terms, it can be said that the experimentation and spontaneity that De Braekeleer permitted himself in his landscapes resonate with the impressionist spirit. He also clearly shared the impressionists' predilection for seeking out sites on the river that highlighted the intersection of the natural landscape with towns, commerce, and industry. Romantic notions of untamed nature and heroic seafaring, still popular among Belgian artists in the 1870s and 1880s, did not appeal to him. Like his French colleagues working along the Seine, he had an eye for the unexpected beauty that could be wrought out of everyday life on the water.

Yet the technique that De Braekeleer employed in his paintings of the Scheldt is not really comparable to impressionist methods. His palette, rich in earth tones, is not nearly so bold nor so bright, and he did not indicate the action of light by juxtaposing small touches of color. The difference in approach is most evident in De Braekeleer's treatment of the water as an opaque surface, unbroken by reflections or by the dazzle of sunlight. It is hard to imagine an impressionist painter working in this period who would have missed the opportunity to accentuate the glimmering motion of the river. De Braekeleer, it seems, was more interested in exploring tonal harmonies and the movement of his brush, than in iridescent effects.

However strong the attraction of impressionism proved to be in Belgium, it did not gain ground so swiftly or comprehensively that it swept up an artist as reserved as De Braekeleer. Nonetheless, the apparent ease with which he produced snappy views of Antwerp's port indicates that the currents of change were moving briskly. By the 1880s even relatively unadventurous Belgian artists were au courant with the essential concept of paint-

ing the contemporary countryside in a manner that reflected the quick, mutable rhythms of modern life.

Most of De Braekeleer's extant paintings of the Scheldt are busy compositions, but he was capable of great simplicity and delicacy. One especially accomplished example in this vein is *The Scheldt near Antwerp* (plate 62). Here, De Braekeleer pared down his composition, emphasizing the sweep of the river and the wide ribbon of the sky. He used smooth strokes of paint to depict the water and the land, adding calligraphic touches of dark pigment to indicate boats, the stumps of posts, the distant Antwerp skyline, and a man on the beach. The minimalism of the scene draws attention to the artist's decorative sensibilities, evident in the dynamic diagonal angle of the shoreline; the flat planes of color indicating the Scheldt, the riverbank, and the sky; and the subtle harmony of blue, gray, and brown tints. Soft yellows and oranges at the upper left of the picture evoke the muted light of a cloudy Belgian sunrise or sunset; in this instance, De Braekeleer did indicate the reflections of colored light on the water. It was not without cause that the influential writer and critic Emile Verhaeren wrote that De Braekeleer "captured all the melancholy, all the gray hours...of his country."[15] Formally restrained yet emotionally evocative, the scene advances a pictorial strategy that would find its full expression in the landscapes of compatriots such as Théo van Rysselberghe, whose work was enriched by the advent of pointillism and symbolism in the Belgian art world in the 1880s and 1890s (fig. 10).

10. Théo van Rysselberghe (1862–1926), *Coastal Scene*, c. 1892. Oil on canvas, 51 x 61 cm, National Gallery, London, NG6582.

De Braekeleer's ability to work in divergent styles simultaneously is remarkable. It is regrettable that the potential of such an adept hand was not completely realized. The artist died young, unexpectedly, at the age of forty-eight, of an illness whose precise character is unclear. He did not live to see the great groundswells of impressionism, pointillism, and symbolism in Belgium, but he may have intuited which way the winds were blowing. In 1887, eight of his works, among them an unidentified *A View of Oosterweel*,[16] were included in the annual show of the pioneering exhibition society *Les XX* in Brussels, along with seascapes and landscapes by James Ensor, Fernand Khnopff, Camille Pissarro, Fritz Thaulow, Jan Toorop, and Georges Seurat, including *A Sunday on La Grand Jatte* (1884–86, Art Institute of Chicago).[17] It requires a broad mind to imagine an exhibition that displayed such a wide range of work—each piece under the banner of modernity. This historical convergence is a reminder of how far Belgian landscape painting had come since the nation gained independence in 1830, and of the territory it would cover in the 1890s and beyond.

1 On De Braekeleer's life and career see Herwig Todts, *Henri De Braekeleer (1840–1888)* (Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 1988).

2 "Il a peint les vieux quartiers, les vieux meubles, les vieilles étoffes, non seulement à cause de la suggestion et du mystère dont toute chose s'imprègne à venir de loin, mais aussi certes à cause de la supérieure beauté de ces intérieurs anciens dorés de lumière douce et semblables à des sanctuaires ou à des châsses." Ernest Verlant, "Henri De Braekeleer," *La Jeune Belgique* 11, no. 2 (Feb. 1892): 110.

3 E.g., "Henri De Braekeleer," *L'Art Moderne* 8, no. 31 (July 29, 1888): 242–43.

4 On De Braekeleer as a landscapist see: Todts, *Henri De Braekeleer*, 136–42, 171–84; Nicole Craenhals and Pierre-Paul Dupont, *Le chant du pays, ou La mouvance de la lumière dans la peinture belge de 1830–1930*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Galerie Maurice Tzwern, 2000), 66–71; Francis Carrette, Herwig Todts, and Vera Lewijse, *Natures de peintres/*

*Schildersignatuur: Boulenger, Artan, Rops, De Braekeleer, Vogels, Ensor* (Brussels: Bruxelles-Musées-Expositions, 2005), 23–38, 121–30.

5 Versions of De Braekeleer's freely brushed compositions, as described in this paragraph, appear in studio scenes that he painted in 1873, 1876, and 1877. Todts, *Henri De Braekeleer*, 128, 152–54, 177–79.

6 Robert Hoozee, "Barbizon et la Belgique," in *L'école de Barbizon: Une dialogue franco-néerlandaise*, ed. John Sillevis and Hans Kraan (The Hague: Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1985), 112–25.

7 See note 5.

8 "Une vie débordée, ailée, furieuse, une activité incessante d'appareillage, une gaieté du ciel et de l'eau chantant dans les cordages et battant le ventre des carènes remplissent le paysage d'une mobilité éternelle." "Il coule plombé et sombre...les lourds nuages pluvieux courant à la débandade dans un ciel d'automne." Camille Lemonnier, "La Belgique: Anvers," *Le Tour du Monde* 2 (1882): 154.

9 On the history of the Scheldt and depictions of it in the nineteenth century see A. J. J. Delen, *De Schilders der Schelde* (Antwerp: Lloyd Anversois, 1956) and Gerald Verbeeck, *Scheldeschilders: 19e & 20e Eeuw* (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 2014).

10 Camille Lemonnier, *Henri De Braekeleer: Peintre de la lumière* (Brussels: G. van Oest, 1905), 29–30.

11 "L'eau, le fleuve, la mer, le navire, les voiles, les cargaisons...l'énorme tapage que remuaient autour de lui." Emile Verhaeren, "Henri De Braekeleer," *La Nation*, Dec. 19, 1891; reprinted in *Pages belges* (Paris: La Renaissance du livre, 1926), 91. "Le tohu-bohu d'importation...tout l'inharmonique et transitoire décor de l'Anvers contemporain." Verlant, "Henri De Braekeleer," 110.

12 For examples see Todts, *Henri De Braekeleer*, 139–40, 181–82.

13 "A l'entrée une étude: H. De Braekeleer, vue de Heyst. Une plage nue, abandonnée par la mer; quelques chaloupes de pêche, échouées, marquent de leurs tons chauds une tache noire dans l'ensemble un peu crayeux du sable, de la mer, et des bâtiments de la digue. Ce n'est pas encore un tableau, c'est cependant plus qu'une impression...qu'est-ce?" J. Lhéan, "Exposition du Cercle artistique," *Revue Artistique* (Antwerp) 5 (Dec. 1, 1882): 237–38. The work is now in a private collection; see Todts, *Henri De Braekeleer*, 136–39.

14 Todts, *Henri De Braekeleer*, 136–42, 171–84. See also Mark-Edo Tralbaut, *De Braekeleeriana: Archivalia, Rariora en Curiosa in verband met leven en werk van de Antwerpse Kunstschilder* (Antwerp: Gemeentebestuur van de Stad Antwerpen, 1972), 378–88.

15 "Il a traduit toutes les mélancolies, toutes les heures grises...de son pays." Emile Verhaeren, "Salon des XX," *La Revue Indépendante*, Mar. 1, 1887, reprinted in *Écrits sur l'art (1881–1892)*, ed. Paul Aron, vol. 1 (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 1997), 276.

16 This is possibly the painting of the same title now in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 4083.

17 Pierre Sanchez, *Le Salon des "XX" et de la Libre esthétique: Répertoire des exposants et liste de leurs œuvres; Bruxelles, 1884–1914* (Dijon: L'Echelle de Jacob, 2012), 14, 181, 240, 313, 348, 364–65, 368.

# "BELGIUM IS AN INDUSTRIALIST": PRIDE AND EXPLOITATION IN THE BLACK COUNTRY, 1850–1900

Catherine Labio

It is a truth widely acknowledged that by 1850 Belgium was second only to Britain as the most industrialized nation in Europe.[1] Many factors had contributed to this development. Belgium was ideally situated, with several large European markets within easy reach and a long history as an enterprising and commercial nation. Its textile industry had thrived since the Middle Ages, especially in Flanders. Coal had been mined in Wallonia since the twelfth century.[2] Steam engines had been in use in the mines of Liège and Charleroi since the early 1720s.[3] The smuggling of a mule jenny into Ghent in the last years of the eighteenth century had launched an industrialist revival of the Flemish city, turning it into "Belgium's Manchester."[4] During the Napoleonic era, while the French economy had stalled, Belgium's textile and iron industries had boomed to meet French demand.[5]

Since the middle of the eighteenth century, the Walloon coal and iron industries had been the principal engines of industrialization.[6] Wallonia had important natural resources, a long mining tradition, and highly skilled metallurgical workers. It was also an early adopter of the technologies that made industrialization possible. National policies further contributed to its rise as an industrial powerhouse. Soon after independence from the Netherlands in 1830, the government sponsored an extensive railway network that eased the transportation of goods and workers and had the added benefit of fostering tourism, including industrial tourism.[7] Moreover, from the 1830s until the defeat of the Liberals in the 1880s, Belgian governments embraced laissez-faire economics and a form of "Manchester liberalism" that gave free rein to "the adoption of modern, capital-intensive techniques in manufacturing and mining."[8] In spite of various setbacks, including the potato blight responsible for a wave of emigration during the "hungry forties," by the middle of the nineteenth century, Belgium had been on the fast track to industrial growth for decades.[9]

Belgian industrialization reached its peak in the 1850s and 1860s. The next two decades were marked instead by long periods of economic depression, driven by international competition and compounded by a worldwide recession. As in other European countries, agriculture suffered, in part because of imports from the United States and Russia, which led to another wave of emigration, the subject of Eugène Laermans's triptych *The Emigrants* (1896) and of the etching in the Collection of Sura Levine (plate 73).[10] In Wallonia, after two decades of peak growth, the coal industry suffered from competition with France and Britain, just as mines began to show signs of depletion.[11] Its golden age was, Erik Buyst argues, effectively over.[12]

The human cost of industrialization was high. In the first half of the nineteenth century workers in traditional sectors suffered while industrial wages remained stagnant, a phenomenon historian Joel Mokyr has described as a "process of 'immiserization.'"[13] As a result, according to Mokyr, "the fruits of the industrial expansion in the first half of the nineteenth century were not reaped by most of the Belgians who lived during that time, but by their descendants in the second half of the century and later."[14] "Fruits" is a relative term.

Real wages did rise "by 49 percent between 1853 and 1875 and grew again by four percent between 1896 and 1910."[15] Nevertheless, that same year B. Seebohm Rowntree observed that while Belgian workers worked much longer hours than their British counterparts, their wages—admittedly higher than they had been in 1846—were still much lower than British workers', to the point where "there is no doubt that there are hundreds of thousands of workmen in Belgium who are habitually under-nourished."[16] Indeed, Patricia Penn Hilden has reached the damning and ironic conclusion that even a hypothetical—and unlikely—family of four, better paid underground miners could not have earned enough to afford the diet the state provided to its soldiers and prisoners.[17] To add injury to insult, the Belgian government was notorious for the violence with which it crushed its own people. Karl Marx expressed a commonly held view when he railed "there exists only one small country of the civilized world where armed forces exist in order to massacre striking workers, where every strike is seized with avidity and malice as an official pretext to slaughter the workers."[18] In April 1885, in response to the unemployment and misery that were taking hold, workers' organizations joined forces to create the *Parti Ouvrier Belge* (P.O.B.). From 1886 to 1892, Belgium was the site of numerous and brutally repressed demonstrations, strikes, and riots.[19]

The land suffered too, especially in the Walloon provinces of Liège to the east and the Hainaut to the west. The Hainaut town of Charleroi and its surrounding areas, which captured the imagination of numerous artists in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, came to be known as "le pays noir" (the Black Country).[20] The ecological destruction had already begun to accelerate in the eighteenth century, when, as Isabelle Parmentier has shown, the growing number of coal mining and other operations polluted water, air, and soil in the country and the city. To make matters worse, in Charleroi, founded in 1666, these and other industrial nuisances were greeted with an indifference not found in older and larger Belgian and French towns, where complaints abounded and authorities did on occasion ban factories. In Charleroi they looked the other way.[21] After all, as noted in a deposition filed in 1753, "l'eau sale faisait également tourner le moulin que l'eau claire" (dirty water powered the mill as efficiently as clear water did).[22] Even doctors were loath to blame horrendous living and working conditions for the illnesses and injuries they witnessed all around them.[23] This laissez-faire attitude meant that Charleroi was "ideally" situated when the second phase of industrialization began in the 1820s.

1. Adrien Canelle (fl. 1843–68), *Coal Mines of Sart-lez-Moulin in Courcelles, near Charleroi*, from *Belgique industrielle* (Brussels: Jules Géruzet, c. 1854–56), plate 98.

2. Edwin Toovey (1826–1906), *Cockerill Company Plant: Blast Furnaces, Machine Shops, and Coal Mines in Seraing, near Liège*, from *Belgique industrielle*, plate 71.

## *BELGIQUE INDUSTRIELLE*

In such a context the publication of *Belgique industrielle: Vues des établissements industriels de la Belgique* (*Industrial Belgium: Views of the Industrial Enterprises of Belgium*), a compilation of some two hundred topographical lithographs created between 1850 and 1855, may be somewhat unexpected.[24] The prints, most of which show exterior views, make no reference to the ecological and human costs of industrialization. Instead, they draw on the conventions of the picturesque, the sublime, and the beautiful. Many are panoramic, in which case factories, mines, and other establishments are usually set back, foregrounded by other markers of industry such as canals and passing trains, or, more frequently, by a peaceful river or pastoral setting from which well-dressed observers and even a painter with his easel can admire the view (fig. 1). Chimney stacks are featured in almost every print, but the plumes of smoke that escape them tend to be small, almost dainty, and to waft away from the viewer. In country set-

tings chimneys are often paired with tall trees. In town settings they evoke church spires and belfries, earlier symbols of technological and economic prowess. A nighttime view of the Cockerill industries draws on tropes associated with the sublime: two spectators standing atop a promontory watch from a safe distance the awesome display of glowing buildings and chimneys spewing bright plumes of smoke (fig. 2). Closer to the mines and factories, five tiny, barely identifiable figures draw the viewer's gaze even closer to the blazing works. The color lithograph is the sole nighttime view in the two volumes, but it belongs to a long tradition of factory views that explore the contrast between light and darkness in order to underscore the terror and fascination factories exercised on contemporaries who no longer needed to travel to Mount Vesuvius for a sublime experience.

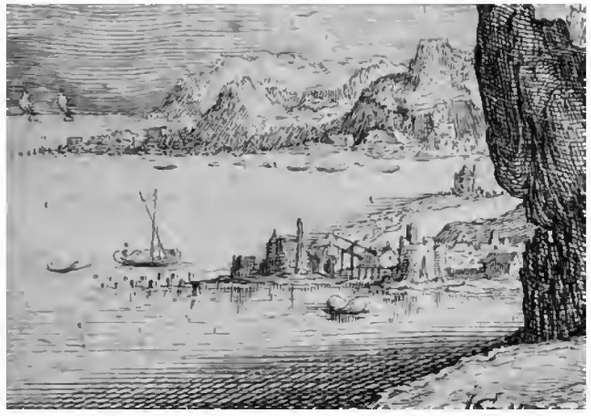
3. Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg (1740–1812), *Coalbrookdale by Night*, 1801. Oil on canvas, 68 x 106.7 cm, Science Museum, London, 1952-452.

The nighttime view of the Cockerill mines and factories has roots in a number of works by British artists. Among these are Joseph Wright of Derby's *An Iron Forge* (1772), Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg's *Coalbrookdale by Night* (1801, fig. 3), John Sell Cotman's *Bedlam Furnace*, also known as *In the Black Country* (c. 1802), and Joseph Mallord William Turner's *Limekiln at Coalbrookdale* (c. 1797) and *Keelmen Heaving In Coals by Moonlight* (1835). It is also consistent with Victor Hugo's description of Cockerill's blast furnaces in letter seven of *Le Rhin*, a travel narrative published in 1842:

> Once one has traveled beyond the location called *la Petite-Flemalle*, the whole thing becomes inexpressible and truly magnificent. The entire valley appears punctured by erupting craters. A few disgorge swirls of scarlet steam that sparkles with stars behind the copses; others draw lugubriously the black outlines of the villages against a red backdrop; elsewhere flames appear through gaps in a cluster of buildings....
>
> Curiosity drove me to alight and come closer to one of these lairs. There I truly admired industry. It is a beautiful and prodigious spectacle which at night seems to borrow something supernatural from the sadness of the hour. The wheels, the saws, the furnaces, the rolling mills, the cylinders, the beams, all these copper, tin, and bronze monsters we call machines and which steam gives life to—a terrifying and terrible life—bellow, whistle, creak, grumble, sniff, bark, yelp, shred bronze, twist iron, chew granite, and, at times, surrounded by the black and smoky workers who harass them, scream in pain in the incandescent atmosphere of the works, like hydras and dragons tormented by demons in hell.[25]

From the perspective of the history of art, the idealization and hyper-representation or mythification of industrial landscapes is hardly unexpected. For Belgian and other European artists, the subject matter presented a challenge to the pastoral imagery with which landscape art has long been associated. In addition, artists as well as buyers tended to come from the bourgeoisie and either did not see or did not care to acknowledge the environmental and human costs of their wealth.[26] There was thus a significant gap between the history of industrialization and its adoption as a proper subject of art. Indeed, while Belgian artists would eventually "tremper la plume dans de l'encre rouge" (dip their pen in red ink) and create some of the most pow-

4. Joannes or Lucas van Doetecum, *Landscape with St. Jerome*, 1560–64 (detail of plate 15).



5. Andries Jacobsz. Stock, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, 1608–12 (detail of plate 9).

6. Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–97), *Arkwright's Mills*, c. 1795–96. Oil on canvas, 58.8 x 76.2 cm, Derby Museum and Art Gallery, 2016-56/2.

7. James Ward (1769–1859), *Landscape near Swansea, South Wales*, c. 1805. Oil on panel, 11.7 x 30.5 cm, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, B2001.2.206.

erful depictions of industrial landscape and labor in European art, they only did so toward the end of the nineteenth century.[27]

Nevertheless, Adrien Canelle, Edwin Toovey, Guillaume Victor van der Hecht, and the other artists who contributed to Géruzet's *Belgique industrielle* could draw on a wide range of precedents, beyond the conventions of the sublime. As Lucie-Smith and Dars have noted, "the appetite for representations of work and workers...had always existed among the members of a more fortunate and leisured class."[28] To be sure, "paintings showing the lives of the poor, and even those that showed the operations of industry...formed part of a tradition that stretched back as far as the early fifteenth century."[29] Indeed, one need only think of some the illuminations depicting the different months of the year in the Limbourg Brothers' *Très riches heures du duc de Berry* (c. 1412–16), Pieter Bruegel's *Allegory of Prudence* (1559–60, plate 4) and *Summer* (1568, plate 6), and the backgrounds of Joannes or Lucas van Doetecum's etching after Lucas Gassel's *Landscape with St. Jerome* (1560–64, plate 15, fig. 4) and Andries Jacobsz. Stock's etching after Jacob de Gheyn II's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* (1608–12, plate 9, fig. 5).

The artists who created Géruzet's lithographs could also draw on more recent models. The frequent distancing and occasional decentering of the main subject behind natural and rural features echo the composition of such works as Joseph Wright of Derby's *Arkwright's Mills* (c. 1795–96, fig. 6) and James Ward's *Landscape near Swansea, South Wales* (c. 1805, fig. 7). In addition, many of the panoramic views belong to the iconography of illustrated travel guides.[30] These date back to the publication of Lodovico Guicciardini's *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi* (*Description of All the Low Countries*) in Antwerp in 1567, but became even more popular with the advent of the railway.[31] In particular, many of the prints owe much to the composition of topographical views of industrial towns and factories created in England in the first half of the nineteenth century with a view to celebrate Britain's achievements and draw more tourists to the monuments and sites of the modern world. The composition of a pen and ink drawing of Sheffield's *Cyclops Works* created circa 1845–50 can thus be seen as a model for many of the lithographs in *Belgique industrielle*. Here, as Tim Barringer observes, "the drawing stages an exaggerated contrast between foreground and background....The main subject is distanced from the viewer by a beguiling vignette of timeless, pastoral forms of labour, replete with reapers and peasants sawing timber for firewood."[32]

Some of the closer and interior factory views in particular are also encyclopedic in their attention to detail and bring to mind the many Enlightenment prints and paintings that celebrated and promoted technological advances and economic endeavors. Examples include the plates that illustrate industrial activities in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1751–72), Johann Ernst Jules Heinsius's *Une démonstration à la fonderie de Douai* (*A Demonstration at the Douai Foundry*) (c. 1770), Gabriel Jacques de Saint-Aubin's *Ouvroir de fileuse à deux mains* (*Factory with Spinsters Working with Two Hands*) (c. 1776–77), and Léonard Defrance's *Interior of a Foundry* (1789). Instead of being out of step with the times, the publication of the lithographs in *Belgique industrielle* can thus be interpreted as the embodiment of an Enlightenment ideology of technological progress still current in the middle of the nineteenth century, even if competing visions were also beginning to take hold.[33] Moreover, the publication of *Belgique industrielle* can also be thought of, as Luc Verpoest has argued, as a midpoint in a one-hundred-year continuum

bookended by the utopian visions of Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's neoclassical *La ville idéale de Chaux* (1804) and Tony Garnier's *Une cité industrielle*, first exhibited in 1904.[34]

The industrial landscapes included in the two volumes published by Géruzet obey the conventions of the picturesque and the sublime while also underscoring, without irony, their inherent beauty. For many nineteenth-century observers, industry "enlivens" (*vivifie*) and "gladly embellishes" (*se fait un plaisir d'embellir*) the countryside.[35] As a result, factories were, somewhat improbably for the twenty-first-century viewer, steeped into the apocalyptic language of ecological disaster, imbued with aesthetic and decorative qualities. Landscape architects even made a point of integrating factories into private vistas. Amélie Favry's observations are worth quoting at some length here:

> The assignation of aesthetic qualities to factories finds an unexpected manifestation in the layout of private gardens. For example, in the 1830s, the owner of Viane Castle decided to include in his park openings through which factories became visible. He thus turned into a reality the then widely held theory that tended to compare an industrialized region to "an English garden in which one has placed factories rather than pavilions or Swiss dairies."...Around 1820, a windmill, a sawmill, and a tannery established along the Willebroek Canal, could be found straight across from the Laeken Castle. In Uccle, a plot for sale was advertised for its location, which "nature and art have conspired to embellish with valleys and brooks (...) the various factories that dot their banks, and the country properties that surround it."[36]

## "LA BELGIQUE EST UN INDUSTRIEL"

The ability to find beauty in factories is at odds with the idealization of rural life that characterized much eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European literature and art as industrialization was taking hold. In 1770 Oliver Goldsmith published *The Deserted Village*, a long and highly successful poem that offered a sentimental and idealized vision of the rural past. As the laboring poor were being forced to leave their farms and villages, Goldsmith evoked:

> The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
> The never failing brook, the busy mill,
> The decent church that topt the neighbouring hill,
> The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade.[37]

In *The Village* (1783), his answer to Goldsmith's poem, George Crabbe attempted to draw the reader's attention instead to the harsh living and working conditions of the rural poor and to the role played by nature and landowners in their plight. Where nature withheld its bounty, laborers toiled in vain. Where it allowed for plenty, it only made other men wealthy. In the first instance, "mankind complain[s] / Of fruitless toil and labour spent in vain." In the second, "The wealth around them makes them doubly poor."[38] Crabbe's more realistic verse could not, however, dislodge from the national imagination Goldsmith's more resonant—and frequently illustrated—vision of an idyllic past vacated by a harsh modernity. This predilection for a romanticized vision of the rural past over the industrial present on the part of readers also accounts for comparable developments in the visual arts. In the 1770s and 1780s Thomas Gainsborough painted his ambiguously idyllic *Cottage Door* paintings.[39] In 1785 George Stubbs created the idealized harvest scene *The Reapers*.

This Arcadian turn was not uniquely British. The myth of rural virtue and primitive simplicity and the attendant nostalgia for agriculture, in the words of the author of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), "the original destination of man," has long been a feature of European culture.[40] As industrialization spread and agriculture itself became increasingly mechanized, British, French, and Belgian artists like John Linnell, Jean-François Millet, and Hippolyte Boulenger (plate 43) turned to the Bruegelian topos of the harvest well into the nineteenth century.[41] It was in Britain, however, that the disconnect between the facts of industrialization and the fiction of an idyllic rural past was most pregnant. William Blake's stark contrast between "Englands pleasant pastures" and "these dark Satanic Mills" in the Preface to *Milton* (1804) gave "Englands green & pleasant Land" a fabled status that became central to the British landscape tradition and to British identity more generally.[42]

8. Paul Sandby (1731–1809), *A View of Vinters at Boxley, Kent, with Mr. Whatman's Turkey Paper Mills*, 1794. Gouache, watercolor, and graphite on handmade Whatman wove paper on canvas, 69.3 x 102 cm, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, B2002.29.

9. Paul Sandby, *A View of Vinters at Boxley*, 1794 (detail).

The depth of Britain's nostalgic identification with a mythical rural past was a function of the speed and scale of its industrialization. The tension between the two visions of Britain generated a deep ambivalence on display in Paul Sandby's *A View of Vinters at Boxley, Kent, with Mr. Whatman's Turkey Paper Mills* (1794), a large watercolor created on paper produced in the mill at the center of the composition (figs. 8–9). As Scott Wilcox remarks, the focus on the mill rather than on the more distant country house, "signals a newly assertive industrial presence in the countryside" while "the incorporation of the factory within the traditional format of the estate portrait both legitimizes and ennobles it."[43] At the same time, unlike the topographical prospects in *Belgique industrielle*, the mill does not assert its presence, or, rather, its assertiveness is tinged with diffidence and an air of pastoral propriety that leaves plenty of room for the representation of more traditional pursuits: the driving of cattle, the cultivation of hops.

The lithographs in *Belgique industrielle*, created just a few years after the revolutions of 1848 and the publication of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's *Communist Manifesto*, written in Brussels, fit well within existing aesthetic categories and often evince an idealization of the rural past shared by other industrially advanced European nations.[44] This idealization is less pronounced in Belgium than in Britain, however, for a number of historical and ideological reasons. First, Belgian agriculture was less affected by industrialization.[45] The more mechanized tools invented in the middle of the century were not adopted on any significant scale for several decades and Belgian workers alternated frequently between industrial and farm labor, which helped maintain rural culture.[46] Second, the loss of rural laboring employment and the attendant displacements into mining jobs and emigration do not appear to have been at the center of preoccupations: "rural labourers vanished from Belgian agriculture with barely a peep, either through switching to paid employment in the coal mines or industry, or through upward mobility within the agricultural sector itself."[47] In addition, signs of industry had long been an integral part of life in the smaller, more densely populated country, as well as an accepted topos of Flemish art. For most of the commentators writing in the first half of the nineteenth century, "modern factories were merely the contemporary extension of the traditional mills and manufactures. Quarries had *always* existed....Why would [the passer-by who discovered them] worry once he considered the limited size of the area in question? As for workers' laboring conditions, did all contemporaries take an interest in the arduous nature of ancestral farm duties?"[48]

The idealization of the land and rural labor, while hardly absent and, indeed, re-energized by the success of French realist painters such as Courbet and Millet on the Belgian art market, did not resonate equally in the two most industrialized European nations. The scale of industrialization, especially near the towns of Liège and Charleroi, did in time lead to a national debate over the social price of industrialization, but not before the country had defined itself as an industrial and economically successful nation, staking its national pride and identity almost solely on its ability to generate wealth through industrialization. This explains why one finds no publication comparable in scale to Géruzet's *Belgique industrielle* elsewhere in Europe, not even Britain.[49] It is a vanity project for the individual factory owners and a work of propaganda for the newly independent country. As the president of the organizing committee of the 1841 *Exposition des produits de l'industrie nationale* (Exhibition of the Products of the National Industry) declared: "La Belgique est un industriel" (Belgium is an industrialist).[50]

## REALISM AND RADICALISM

The national identification of Belgium with industry, to the point where the figure of the industrialist could personify the entire nation, accounts for three distinct yet overlapping stages in the history of Belgian industrial art in the second half of the nineteenth century: first, the optimistic or triumphant phase exemplified by the publication of *Belgique industrielle*; second, the realistic phase of the 1850s to 1870s, during which the question of industrialization tended to be either set aside or referred to obliquely even though its human and environmental costs were becoming ever more apparent; and third, the socially conscious and more radical phase of the 1880s and 1890s, which brought "le pays noir" to the forefront of political and artistic preoccupations.

10. Gustave Courbet (1819–77), *Landscape at Ornans*, c. 1855. Oil on canvas, 42 x 55.5 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 4009.

Close cultural ties between Brussels and Paris meant that French realism found ready acceptance in Belgian circles as early as the 1840s. Gustave Courbet made several trips to Belgium in the 1840s and 1850s.[51] *The Stonebreakers*, created in 1849 and destroyed in the Dresden bombings of 1945, caused a stir when it was exhibited in the Brussels Salon of 1851.[52] His *Landscape at Ornans* (c. 1855, fig. 10), now in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, certainly found an echo in Jean Pierre François Lamorinière's *Landscape in Kempen with Shepherd and Sheep* (plate 56). Jean-François Millet's *L'Angélus* (1857–59), now in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, was first purchased by Belgian owners.[53] In 1860 Millet signed a contract giving exclusive purchasing rights to Belgian art dealer Arthur Stevens, brother of artists Joseph and Alfred Stevens, upon which Millet's works were shown in Belgium before they were exhibited in France.[54]

The Belgian embrace of French realism can be ascribed in part to what Hoozee has called Belgium's tradition of "deeply entrenched Realism."[55] We can find evidence of this tradition and of shared concerns with social issues in Joseph Stevens's *Brussels, Morning* (1848) and *More Faithful than Happy* (1848), both in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Alfred Stevens's *The Hunters of Vincennes* (also known as *What Is Called Vagrancy*), created circa 1855, now in the Musée d'Orsay, and Charles De Groux's *The Gleaners*, which, like Millet's painting by the same title, was created in 1857.[56]

Realism shocked, not only because it depicted lower or "vulgar" subjects, but because its monumentalization of such subjects was rightly viewed as a challenge to the existing order. It was, as Baudson has claimed, "perceived as an accusation and a call for change."[57] Unlike the dramatic black-and-white representations of the impact of industrialization on modern society Vincent van Gogh had copied from illustrated magazines during his stay in England in 1873–76, the accusation launched by Belgian realist landscape painters did not by and large take the form of an overt critique of industrialization.[58] As paintings by Hippolyte Boulenger, Joseph Coosemans, Théodore Fourmois, and other members of the School of Tervuren demonstrate (plates 39–44), until the 1880s Belgian landscape painters focused their energies on creating idealized natural and rural landscapes. As had been the case in eighteenth-century Britain, they did so as such prospects and the traditional activities that had sustained them were disappearing. Industrialization was responsible for this nostalgic "return to nature," but was, according to the rules of the genre at that particular moment, largely invisible. It was tried in absentia.

Industrialization became a major theme of Belgian landscape art in the 1880s. The notion that beauty is a necessary component of art remained one of the principal hurdles in the depiction of industrial landscapes, but conditions were different. In 1884, after years of economic depression, the Liberal Party lost the elections. In 1885, year of the publication of Émile Zola's *Germinal*, the P.O.B. was founded. In March 1886 violent riots and strikes erupted in Wallonia. The promise of industrial growth and progress no longer held the status of "pensée unique." This freed artists and writers to explore new ways of representing industrial landscapes.

Foremost among them was Constantin Meunier (1831–1905), best known for his sculptures of miners and dock workers. As Fernand Khnopff recalled in 1905, in the late 1870s, "Camille Lemonnier, who was commis-

11. Constantin Meunier, *Industrial View of the Borinage* (or *Industrial View, Charleroi*), c. 1880–82. Oil on canvas, 69 x 102 cm, Meunier Museum, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 283.

12. Constantin Meunier, *The Return of the Miners*, n.d. Oil on canvas, 150 x 233 cm, Meunier Museum, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 203.

sioned to describe Belgium for the French review *Le Tour du Monde*, asked Constantin Meunier to illustrate the pages devoted to the workers in factories and mines."[59] The request was a turning point in Meunier's career. He painted a number of interior factory views, as well as the *Industrial View of the Borinage* (also known as *Industrial View, Charleroi*), now in the Meunier Museum (fig. 11). In the foreground, a flowery meadow, a path with two human figures, including one on horseback, a hamlet, and some fields a little farther to the left are a nod to the picturesque. This foreground is relatively narrow, however, and does not offer a significant buffer between the viewer and the focus of the painting, a much darker, but even narrower band depicting an industrial landscape. The foreground and industrial scene take up a little less than the bottom half of the painting. In the upper section large plumes of smoke come out of the chimneys in a leftward direction. Patches of blue sky and some lighter clouds are clustered near the center of the sky, but it is difficult to tell where pollution ends and clouds begin. In the upper right corner and close to the very top of the canvas, dark clouds gather. As a result, while the eye is drawn upward toward the lighter sky, this upward gaze is thwarted by the size of the sky and the gathering darkness. There does not appear to be a way out. The same is true of a number of other paintings Meunier did at the time and in which he zooms in on key features of the industrial landscape, including *La Cheminée*, a dark winter scene dominated—and split almost down the middle—by a towering chimney.

In Meunier's most memorable industrial paintings, the landscape is secondary to figures of male and female miners and factory workers. In *The Return of the Miners* (fig. 12) five powerful figures stride on, dwarfing the mine in the background. The watercolor of a *Hiercheuse* (Meunier Museum, Brussels, 303) shows the head and shoulders of a young woman in profile against a mining landscape. Her figure takes up most of the left half of the watercolor and exudes a calm and thoughtful confidence. In these works, as in the version of Millet's *The Sower* (1850) in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the human figure dominates the landscape. It is set *against* it. Even the burdened, faceless *Hiercheuse Climbing a Heap of Coal* (plate 72) takes over the drawing. Unlike Van Gogh's weavers and potato eaters, Meunier's workers are idealized, heroic figures, untouched by illness or injury. In contrast, François Maréchal's bleak rendition of an industrial landscape in *Valley of the Meuse* (1892, plate 70) appears to leave little room for human agency.

Cécile Douard's depictions of coal gleaners in *The Gleaners of Coal* (c. 1892–95, Artothèque de Mons) and *The Slag Heap* (1898) suggest instead that it is impossible to separate the landscape from the workers. The landscape is the locus of their unremitting toil and pain and Douard depicts both in equally dark and grim tones. In mining as in agriculture, gleaners were low in the workers' hierarchy. "The worst work of all," Hilden explains, "usually, but not always reserved for elderly or incapacitated women—was that of the '*glaneuses*.' These gleaners worked on the towering, slippery black slag heaps that surrounded every coal mine, picking usable coal from the waste."[60] In Douard's last painting, created as her vision was failing (fig. 13), *glaneuses* ascend a slag heap as wagons dump waste matter from above. The figures almost meld into their surroundings as they make their dangerous ascent. The light above might signal that there is hope at the end of the ordeal, but wagons stand between the *glaneuses* and the light. Moreover, the light may well be another sign of mining activity rather than heavenly deliverance.

Belgian social art of the late nineteenth century is often portrayed as uniquely radical, especially in comparison with France, a situation accounted for by the particularly harsh form of industrialization inflicted on its population and on a close collaboration between politicians, intellectuals, and avant-garde writers and artists

(as evidenced by the creation of the *Section d'art* of the *Maison du peuple*, headquarters of the P.O.B., in 1891), for which no French equivalent existed.[61] And yet, Douard's uncompromising vision is the exception rather than the rule. Even in the heyday of social realism, representing industrialization was too transgressive an act, one that subverted both aesthetic conventions and political codes in a country where the *Parti Ouvrier* did not define itself as either Marxist or socialist and was "davantage modéré que révolutionnaire" (moderate rather than revolutionary), and where even socialist bourgeois writers who contributed to *La Wallonie* (1886–92) were in favor of the separation of art and protest.[62] In addition, social realism was only one artistic movement among many. As Hoozee notes, "in the 1860s and 1870s there was a certain homogeneity in the plastic arts, with Realism identifiable as the dominant mode. In contrast, the Belgian art of the 1880s and 1890s is strikingly varied."[63]

*Thames Scene, the Elevator* (c. 1890, plate 74), in which Georges Lemmen explores the play of light and smog, must be understood in this context. The work represents a significant departure from earlier conventions in industrial landscape art. The viewer is not invited to appreciate the monumental and productive nature of industry in its stunning modernity. Nor is she expected to be mesmerized by the red glow of a Vulcanian forge. Instead the blue-green palette reinforces the uncanny stillness of works shrouded in fog. Rather than a vivifying depiction of human activity, one finds a deathly, Whistlerian quiet, a somewhat ominous beauty that bears witness, albeit in oblique fashion, to the social and environmental costs of industrialization.

13. Cécile Douard (1866–1941), *The Slag Heap*, 1898. Oil on canvas, 193.5 x 111 cm, La Boverie, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Liège, 218.

In spite of their unique "vigor,"[64] Belgian artists' radical experiments in social art were unsustainable. This was partly a function of the rapid evolution of artistic movements at the turn of the century. More importantly, few depictions of industrial landscape and labor were as relentlessly bleak as Douard's. Most "protest works" were far more ambivalent. Meunier's heroic depictions of miners and *hiercheuses* found success in part because while they elicited sympathy and identification on the part of the viewer, the emphasis on workers' nobility also allowed viewers to look away from the human cost of physically destructive labor and unhealthy working and living conditions. Likewise, the socio-political impact of Meunier's sculpture *The Firedamp* (1889), which shows a mother bending over the son she has just identified among the victims of a methane explosion, can be seen as both transcended *and* blunted by the evocation of the figure of Christ and the familiar iconography of the pietà.

From the beginning of industrialization in Britain, artists struggled to represent industrial labor and its landscape for aesthetic, economic, and political reasons. Comparing Eugène Laermans's monumental triptych *The Emigrants* (1896, fig. 14) and the etching in our exhibition (plate 73) helps illustrate one form this dilemma took in Belgium in the waning years of the nineteenth century. Both works, one monumental and meant to be displayed in public or at least purchased by a wealthy patron, the other a more modest sketch, show a group of rural workers the economic crisis has forced to emigrate. In the central panel of the triptych the workers march with a mix of longing and determination toward their future. Many turn away from the viewer to take one last look at the village they are leaving behind. In the foreground, a dog is pulling on its leash and is urged on by a child who prods it with a stick. While the mood is somber, the somewhat abstract rendering of the faces, the focus on the flat application of colors in the workers' garments, and the decision to use a form of painting usually associated with religious art, distract from the political engagement of the work.[65] The mood of the engraving is darker. Faces are etched with hunger. The dog is dead. The child walks, but its eyes are two empty circles. The workers do not look back

14. Eugène Laermans (1864–1940), *The Emigrants*, 1896. Oil on canvas, 159 x 420 cm (central panel), Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp, 1369.

toward the land they are leaving behind. There is no village, only dead trees that grow out of a flooded plain, an image that anticipates many of the photographs of the Yser region taken during the First World War. It takes nothing away from the triptych to suggest that the more intimate, less expensive, and less public work offers a more uncompromising critique, a distinction due in some measure to the aesthetic expectations attached to the painting.

The need to adjust to such expectations was particularly acute for Belgian artists because of the role of industrialization in the formation of Belgium's national identity. Indeed, it is important to stress that Belgian artists offered a blunt critique of the "Satanic" dimensions of industrialization only once its glory days were over. As long as industry had delivered economic growth, focusing on its social and human costs had been deferred. In addition, once artists turned their attention to industrial labor and landscape, their radicalism eventually gave way to recognition, which in turn led to the codification and appropriation of industrial art in aesthetically and politically more palatable idioms. We witness this evolution in the success of Pierre Paulus's industrial landscapes, including *La Jeunesse*, shown in the *Salon d'art moderne* held during the *Exposition internationale de Charleroi* of 1911. We also see it in Meunier's increasingly canonical status and the inauguration of his *Monument au travail* in 1930, a massive project combining several of his figures and relief sculptures erected a quarter of a century after his death, by which point the state could and did use social realism for propaganda purposes.[66] In the end, there was no denying that industrialization, in both its successes and failures, was an integral part of the national DNA. Belgium had been and remained "un industriel."

1 National rankings of industrial development for the period 1810–1910 can be found in P. Bairoch, "Niveaux de développement économique de 1810 à 1910," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 20, no. 6 (1965): 1110.

2 Patricia Penn Hilden, *Women, Work, and Politics: Belgium 1830–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 87.

3 Ivan T. Berend, *An Economic History of Nineteenth-Century Europe: Diversity and Industrialization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 198.

4 Hilden, *Women, Work, and Politics*, 19.

5 In contrast, France's industrialization stalled during the Revolution and Napoleonic era. François Crouzet, *De la supériorité de l'Angleterre sur la France: L'économique et l'imaginaire, XVII^e–XX^e siècles* (Paris: Librairie académique Perrin, 1985), 49, translated as *Britain Ascendant: Comparative Studies in Franco-British Economic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1990), 43. As a result, "by 1814 Belgium had 89 blast furnaces; France would not have as many until 50 years later" (Bernard A. Cook, *Belgium: A History* [New York: Peter Lang, 2002], 51). Jan Craeybeckx compares the Belgian and French industrial revolutions in the late eighteenth century in "The Brabant Revolution: A Conservative Revolt in a Backwards Country?," *Acta Historiae Neerlandica* 4 (1970): esp. 63–67.

6 Berend, *Economic History of Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 198.

7 On the role of railways in nineteenth-century Belgium, see Michel Laffut, "Le bilan du rôle des chemins de fer dans le développement de la Belgique du XIX^e siècle," *Histoire, Économie et Société* 11, no. 1 (1992): 81–90 and Janet L. Polasky, *Reforming Urban Labor: Routes to the City, Roots in the Country* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

8 Eugenia W. Herbert, *The Artist and Social Reform: France and Belgium, 1885–1898* (1961; repr., Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 9 and Joel Mokyr, "Industrial Growth and Stagnation in the Low Countries, 1800–1850," *Journal of Economic History* 36, no. 1 (1976): 276.

9 Cook, *Belgium*, 69–72. Also see Hilden, *Women, Work, and Politics*, 29–35.

10 Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique VII: De la Révolution de 1830 à la guerre de 1914*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Lamertin, 1948), 249.

11 Erik Buyst, "L'évolution de l'activité économique belge: 1850–2000," in *La Belgique industrielle en 1850: Deux cents images d'un monde nouveau*, ed. Bart van der Herten, Michel Oris, and Jan Roegiers (Brussels: Crédit Communal;

Deurne: MIM, 1995), 357.

12 Buyst, 357.

13 Mokyr, "Industrial Growth and Stagnation in the Low Countries," 278.

14 Mokyr, 278.

15 Cook, *Belgium*, 75.

16 B. Seebohm Rowntree, *Land and Labour: Lessons from Belgium* (London: Macmillan, 1910), 72–76, 83. Note that in 1910 Belgium had a population of just over 7.4 million people (Wikipedia, s.v. "Demographics in Belgium," last modified July 10, 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Belgium).

17 Hilden, *Women, Work, and Politics*, 98–100.

18 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Adresse aux ouvriers," in *La Belgique des insurrections* (n.d.), quoted in Hilden, *Women, Work, and Politics*, 122.

19 Jeannine Paque, "1886: Albert Mockel fonde *La Wallonie*," in *Histoire de la littérature belge francophone, 1830–2000*, ed. Jean-Pierre Bertrand, Michel Biron, Benoît Denis, and Rainier Grutman, with the collaboration of David Vrydaghs (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2003), 153.

20 The impact of industrialization on agriculture in general and Flemish agriculture in particular has also been the subject of recent investigations. See Eric Vanhaute and Leen van Molle, "Belgian Agrarian and Rural History, 1800–2000," in *Rural History in the North Sea Area: An Overview of Recent Research, Middle Ages–20th Century*, ed. Erik Thoen and Leen van Molle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 217–48. Dorine Cardyn-Oomen has studied Belgian artists' handling of this particular theme in "Landelijk leven gezien door Belgische schilders in de 19de eeuw," in *Schilders van het landelijke leven in België: Van realisme tot post-expressionisme*, exh. cat. (Tielt: Lannoo, 1990), 47–61.

21 Isabelle Parmentier, *Histoire de l'environnement en Pays de Charleroi, 1730–1830: Pollution et nuisances dans un paysage en voie d'industrialisation* (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 2008), esp. 149–59, 169–72, 183–84, 281–88, and 311–17.

22 Parmentier, 317.

23 Parmentier, 289–98.

24 *Belgique industrielle: Vues des établissements industriels de la Belgique* (Brussels: Jules Géruzet, c. 1854–56). The lithographs have been reprinted, in a different order, in separate French and Dutch volumes, Van der Herten, Oris, and Roegiers, *La Belgique industrielle en 1850* and their *Nijver België: Het industriële landschap omstreeks 1850* (Deurne: MIM; Brussels: Crédit Communal, 1995).

25 Victor Hugo, *Le Rhin: Lettres à un ami*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hetzel, 1842), 1:74–76 (https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Le_Rhin/VII). All translations by the author, unless otherwise noted: "Quand on a passé le lieu appelé la Petite-Flemalle, la chose devient inexprimable et vraiment magnifique. Toute la vallée semble trouée de cratères en éruption. Quelques-uns dégorgent derrière les taillis des tourbillons de vapeur écarlate étoilée d'étincelles; d'autres dessinent lugubrement sur un fond rouge la noire silhouette des villages; ailleurs les flammes apparaissent à travers les crevasses d'un groupe d'édifices....

"J'ai eu la curiosité de mettre pied à terre et de m'approcher d'un de ces antres. Là, j'ai admiré véritablement l'industrie. C'est un beau et prodigieux spectacle, qui, la nuit, semble emprunter à la tristesse solennelle de l'heure quelque chose de surnaturel. Les roues, les scies, les chaudières, les laminoirs, les cylindres, les balanciers, tous ces monstres de cuivre, de tôle et d'airain que nous nommons des machines et que la vapeur fait vivre d'une vie effrayante et terrible, mugissent, sifflent, grincent, râlent, reniflent, aboient, glapissent, déchirent le bronze, tordent le fer, mâchent le granit, et, par moments, au milieu des ouvriers noirs et enfumés qui les harcèlent, hurlent avec douleur dans l'atmosphère ardente de l'usine, comme des hydres et des dragons tourmentés par des démons dans un enfer."

26 Edward Lucie-Smith and Celestine Dars, *Work and Struggle: The Painter as Witness* (New York: Paddington, 1977), 26; Robert Hoozee, "Introduction: Belgian Art 1880–1900," in *Impressionism to Symbolism: The Belgian Avant-Garde 1880–1900*, ed. Mary Anne Stevens and Robert Hoozee (London: Royal Academy of Arts; Ghent: Ludion, 1994), 14.

27 Edmond Picard, "L'art et la révolution," *L'Art Moderne* 6, no. 29 (July 18, 1886): 225, quoted in Pierre Baudson,

"L'art social," in *Paris–Bruxelles/Bruxelles–Paris: Réalisme, impressionnisme, symbolisme, art nouveau; Les relations artistiques entre la France et la Belgique, 1848–1914*, ed. Anne Pingeot and Robert Hoozee (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 1997), 371.

28 Lucie-Smith and Dars, *Work and Struggle*, 32.

29 Lucie-Smith and Dars, 26.

30 Lut Pil, "*La Belgique industrielle* et la tradition du paysage pittoresque," in Van der Herten, Oris, and Roegiers, *La Belgique industrielle en 1850*, 23–24.

31 Jean-Louis Kupper, "De Louis Guichardin à *La Belgique industrielle*," in Van der Herten, Oris, and Roegiers, *La Belgique industrielle en 1850*, 25.

32 Tim Barringer, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2005), 190. Also see Caroline Arscott and Griselda Pollock, with Janet Wolff, "The Partial View: The Visual Representation of the Early Nineteenth-Century City," in *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power, and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class*, ed. Janet Wolff (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 218–21.

33 See Amélie Favry, "Les Belges face à leurs industries (1780–1850): Points de vue sur un paysage inédit," *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire/Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Filologie en Geschiedenis* 85, no. 3/4 (2007): 781–804.

34 Luc Verpoest, "Les édifices industriels au XXIe siècle," in Van der Herten, Oris, and Roegiers, *La Belgique industrielle en 1850*, 53.

35 Favry, "Les Belges face à leurs industries," 782.

36 Favry, 786. The sources of the quoted passages are referenced as "Entre Sambre et Meuse: Troisième article; Établissements de Couvin," *L'Indépendant*, no. 241 (Aug. 29, 1841): 3, and *Courrier des Pays-Bas*, no. 164 (June 13, 1829): 4. "L'attribution d'une qualité esthétique aux industries se manifeste par ailleurs de manière inattendue dans la disposition des jardins privés. Dans les années 1830, le propriétaire du château de Viane choisit, par exemple, de ménager dans son parc des trouées par lesquelles se laissent voir des usines. Il concrétise de la sorte un discours répandu à l'époque, tendant à présenter une contrée industrialisée telle 'un jardin anglais dans lequel on a placé des usines au lieu de kiosques et de laiteries suisses.' ...Vers 1820, un moulin à vent, une scierie et une tannerie, implantés le long du canal de Willebroek, font face au château de Laeken. A Uccle, un terrain à vendre se recommande par son emplacement que 'la nature et l'art ont concouru à embellir par les vallées et ruisseaux (...) les diverses fabriques qui longent leurs bords, et les biens de campagne qui l'entourent.'"

37 Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village: A Poem* (London: W. Griffin, 1770), 1–2.

38 George Crabbe, *The Village: A Poem, in Two Books* (London: J. Dodsley, 1783), 1:10.

39 See Ann Bermingham, ed., *Sensation and Sensibility: Viewing Gainsborough's "Cottage Door"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

40 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976; repr., Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1981), 378.

41 On harvest paintings in Victorian Britain, see Barringer, *Men at Work*, 82–131.

42 William Blake, *Milton: A Poem* (copy B), printed c. 1811, http://www.blakearchive.org/images/milton.b.p2.100.jpg. See Christina Payne, *Toil and Plenty: Images of the Agricultural Landscape in England, 1780–1890*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press and Yale Center for British Art, 1993).

43 Scott Wilcox, "Sandby, Whatman, and Watercolor: An Introduction," in *Papermaking and the Art of Watercolor in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Paul Sandby and the Whatman Paper Mill*, ed. Theresa Fairbanks Harris and Scott Wilcox, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press and Yale Center for British Art, 2006), 7.

44 Vanhaute and Van Molle survey the ways in which views on rural society have been long been highly scripted and alternated "between idealization and vilification" ("Belgian Agrarian and Rural History," 228).

45 Rowntree, *Land and Labour*, 69.

46 J. Gadisseur, "Contribution à l'étude de la production agricole en Belgique de 1846 à 1913," *Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine/Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis* 4, no. 1/2 (1973): 7. Lucie-Smith and Dars discuss

European artists' treatments of the mechanization of agricultural labor in *Work and Struggle*, 39; Rowntree, *Land and Labour*, 96.

47 Vanhaute and Van Molle, "Belgian Agrarian and Rural History," 228–29.

48 Favry, "Les Belges face à leurs industries," 784. "Les usines modernes ne sont que le développement contemporain des traditionnels moulins et manufactures. Les carrières ont toujours existé....Quelles raisons aurait-il [le passant qui les découvre] de s'inquiéter s'il considère le caractère délimité de l'espace concerné? Quant aux conditions de travail des ouvriers, les contemporains se sont-ils tous sentis concernés par la pénibilité des tâches agricoles ancestrales?"

49 Bart van der Herten, "Introduction," in Van der Herten, Oris, and Roegiers, *La Belgique industrielle en 1850*, 13.

50 "Discours de M. Wyns, président de la commission organisatrice, lors de l'exposition de l'industrie nationale," *Messager de Gand et des Pays-Bas*, no. 230 (Aug. 18, 1841): 1, quoted in Favry, "Les Belges face à leurs industries," 791.

51 On the ties between Courbet and Belgium, see Robert Hoozee, "Courbet en Belgique," in Pingeot and Hoozee, *Paris–Bruxelles/Bruxelles–Paris*, 152–72 and *Courbet: Mapping Realism; Paintings from the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and American Collections*, ed. Jeffery Howe (Chestnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2013).

52 Cardyn-Oomen, "Landelijk leven gezien door Belgische schilders in de 19de eeuw," 51.

53 Geneviève Lacambre, "Jean-François Millet, *L'Angélus*, 1857–1859," in Pingeot and Hoozee, *Paris–Bruxelles/Bruxelles–Paris*, 146.

54 Robert Hoozee, "École de Barbizon–École de Tervueren," in Pingeot and Hoozee, *Paris–Bruxelles/Bruxelles–Paris*, 140–41.

55 Hoozee, "Introduction: Belgian Art," 15.

56 De Groux's painting is in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Millet's in the Musée d'Orsay.

57 Baudson, "L'art social," 370; "ressenti comme une dénonciation et une revendication."

58 Martin Bailey, "Introduction," in *Van Gogh in England: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Jane Alison and Martin Bailey, exh. cat. (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 1992), 72–83. Linda Nochlin discusses the Dutch artist's ongoing fascination with periodical illustrations in "Van Gogh, Renouard, and the Weavers' Crisis in Lyons," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (Boulder: Westview, 1989), 95–119.

59 Fernand Khnopff, "A Great Belgian Sculptor: Constantin Meunier," *Studio* 35, no. 147 (June 1905): 3–11. Reprinted in *Fernand Khnopff: Writings on Art and Artists*, ed. and trans. Jeffery Howe (Chestnut Hill: Boston College, 2016), https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:107202.

60 Patricia J. Hilden, "The Rhetoric and Iconography of Reform: Women Coal Miners in Belgium, 1840–1914," *Historical Journal* 34, no. 2 (1991): 418.

61 Baudson, "L'art social," 370–72. On the *Section d'art* of the P.O.B., see Paul Aron, *Les écrivains belges et le socialisme (1880–1913): L'expérience de l'art social, d'Edmond Picard à Émile Verhaeren* (Brussels: Éditions Labor, 1995), esp. 65–95.

62 Aurore Boraczek, "1891: Verhaeren célèbre la création de la section d'art du Parti ouvrier belge," in Bertrand et al., *Histoire de la littérature belge francophone*, 173 and Paque, "1886," 153–54.

63 Hoozee, "Introduction: Belgian Art," 25.

64 Baudson, "L'art social," 371.

65 On the revival of the triptych in late nineteenth-century representations of labor, see Linda Nochlin, "Léon Frédéric and *The Stages of a Worker's Life*," in *Politics of Vision*, 122–23.

66 Virginie Devillez, "Dilemma between Engagement and Creativity," in *Constantin Meunier: A Dialogue with Allan Sekula*, ed. Hilde van Gelder (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2005), 63.

# FERNAND KHNOPFF'S LANDSCAPES: NATURE AS MIRROR

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Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921) is widely recognized for his enigmatic symbolist allegories and striking portraits. His landscapes, however, except for the famous images of Bruges, have received far less attention in the critical literature. Recent studies by Michel Draguet, Dominique Marechal, Guy Grosjean, and Andrew Marvick are welcome exceptions.[1] A historian in the Ardennes, Emile Pirard, has carefully documented the historic connections of the Khnopff family to the village of Fosset in a publication as valuable as it is scarce.[2]

Until recently, the concept of a symbolist landscape seemed to be an oxymoron. Recent exhibitions, such as *Mystical Landscapes* at the Art Gallery of Toronto and the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, have shown that this is far from true, however.[3] Landscape painting was an important part of Khnopff's mastery of painting techniques, and a lifelong focus for his art. At least ten percent of his total production is of landscapes, and he regularly exhibited his landscapes in Belgian and international exhibitions.[4] The work of art as a material object has important lessons even for the most mystical of artists. Attempts to reconcile the seemingly opposite styles of realism and symbolism can be seen in Gustave Courbet's *The Artist's Studio: A Real Allegory Summing Up a Seven-Year Phase of My Artistic Life* (1855, Musée d'Orsay) and in the allegorical landscapes of the Pre-Raphaelites, who found their inspiration in the works of Flemish fifteenth-century artists who infused their realistic scenes with deep symbolic content. Interpreting nature itself as a hieroglyphic image provided a path for the reconciliation of the positivist view of Courbet, who insisted that "art in painting should consist only of the representation of things that are visible and tangible to the artist," with the idealist conviction of Arthur Schopenhauer that reality is illusory, a product of subjective mental processes.[5]

After an early flirtation with realist/impressionist views of urban life in Brussels, Khnopff focused on landscapes of rural scenes in the Ardennes and the medieval city of Bruges—in both cases escaping from modern life. The twin poles of Khnopff's landscape painting are found in Fosset and Bruges. Both embody aspects of both realism and symbolism, and are rooted in his personal memories. He spent a good portion of his childhood in Bruges, and his family owned an extensive property in the tiny Ardennes village of Fosset. Although he traveled widely in Europe, Khnopff painted no landscapes of France, Germany, England, or other places he visited—his depictions are always of sites where he lived and to which he had an emotional attachment. They reflect the symbolist interest in portraying the intersection of the exterior world and interior states of mind; the "inscape" is reflected in the landscape.[6] Observation and memory are combined in his images of the land.

As early as 1886, Emile Verhaeren praised Khnopff's landscapes for their important role in keeping him grounded despite his predilection for mystical reveries:

1. Fernand Khnopff, *In Passing, Boulevard du Regent*, 1881. Pastel on paper, 9 x 17.2 cm, private collection.

2. Gustave Caillebotte (1848–94), *Rainy Day, Paris*, 1877. Oil on canvas, 212.2 x 276.2 cm, Art Institute of Chicago, 1964.336.

> Since his debut and up to this moment Fernand Khnopff has depicted landscape. We hope that he will never abandon it, especially today as he is sinking into a great dream. Nature must serve to remind him constantly of reality, otherwise we might fear that he will do an incomplete job. One cannot remain entirely in the real for the same reason one can't separate completely from the beyond. Art is a two-sided unity; as the Catholic God is in three persons, so art is in two.[7]

Verhaeren insisted on the dual nature of art, a blend of observation and imagination, and cautioned Khnopff not to abandon his grounding in objective reality.

## BRUSSELS CITYSCAPES: FIRST ESSAYS IN MODERNISM

It is in Khnopff's landscape paintings that we can most clearly trace his artistic development. One of his earliest exhibited works was a street scene of modern Brussels titled *In Passing, Boulevard du Regent* of 1881 (fig. 1). This is clearly influenced by the contemporary works of realists and impressionists such as Gustave Caillebotte, whose *Rainy Day, Paris* of 1877, it most strongly resembles (fig. 2). The boulevard du Regent was a modern street in Brussels, built in the nineteenth century on the traces of the former city walls. As with so much of Belgium, the modern overlays the old. This painting is a tightly cropped scene of the movements of isolated figures through the rainy city, dressed in somber clothes. No trace of the sky or trees can be seen. At the outset of his career, Khnopff seemed poised to engage with the shifting social context of the city. Dispelling the myth that symbolist artists were only interested in mystical escapism, Sharon L. Hirsh has described the deep cultural impact of urbanization in her book *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society*.[8] This was not how Khnopff's career would unfold, however.

3. Fernand Khnopff, page 95 of sketchbook, 1882. Pencil on paper, 14.6 x 9.6 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 7283.

Only a small sketch for Khnopff's urban scene survives. A product of his youthful enthusiasm for modern art, Emile Verhaeren praised the ambitions shown in this work in 1886:

> In 1882, *In Passing* (boulevard du Regent). The preoccupation to capture the scene taken from life, the physiognomy of this corner of the town, grew in the mind of the painter. He tried to render the ambient air, the trees, the washed-out green of their bark, the appearance of the sidewalks, the façade of the houses and especially the walkers, strollers, passersby, each with his appeal, step, gesture or "look."[9]

This is a modern scene rendered in a modernist style, an asymmetric composition, tightly cropped, portraying a fragment of a scene to evoke the dynamism of modern life and its psychological isolation. The bustle and dynamism of the modern city, however, seem ill-suited to Khnopff's well-known reclusive temperament and his predilection for solitude and introspection. Verhaeren commended a revised version of this work, but still felt it was not reflective of Khnopff's strengths: "This attempt to translate external modernity was renewed in 1883. A new scene of the boulevard: *In Passing around Six O'Clock*. It is greater than the previous one, however much it does not fit with the whole work of the painter."[10] The title of this revised work emphasizes a specific time of day and the spectacle of fleeting moments.

Other experimental street views are found in Khnopff's early sketchbooks, where we see him trying out different dynamic perspective views and Japanese-influenced compositions.[11] Caillebotte's influence on him was strong at this time, as is shown by his sketch of a view from a balcony (fig. 3).

4. Th. Weber (1838–1907), wood engraving after a drawing by Fernand Khnopff, *The Path in the Dunes near Termonde*, in *La Belgique* by Camille Lemonnier (Paris: Librarie Hachette, 1888), 297.

## RURAL SCENES

Khnopff was born in the château of his maternal grandparents in Grembergen-lez-Termonde on September 12, 1858. Although a small colony of artists was located in Termonde (Dendermond in Flemish), Khnopff depicted the area only once, and indirectly at that. Khnopff provided a sketch for *La Belgique* (1888), the monumental illustrated history of Belgium by Camille Lemonnier. His drawing of *The Path in the Dunes near Termonde* was turned into a rather conventional wood engraving by Th. Weber (fig. 4). Lemonnier's book was too significant a project for Khnopff to turn down, and the topic was important to him. As late as 1899, Khnopff wrote to the German art critic Paul Schultze-Naumburg of his fond memories of childhood vacations "during the summer at the château of Grembergen, now destroyed, as well as its beautiful park where I loved all the silent ponds of water, the statues and the great trees."[12] Even though this was the site of some of his earliest childhood memories, Khnopff kept his emotional distance from this work, allowing a commercial engraver to execute his design.

This was not Khnopff's first experiment with publishing. Throughout his career Khnopff was frequently inspired by literature; another book illustration shows a scene of rural life in the Ardennes. Khnopff's depiction of an elderly lawyer in the village square is still and contemplative, emphasizing the dark verticality of the figure. It is one of two illustrations he made for the novel *La Forge Roussel* by Edmond Picard of 1884 (fig. 5).[13] Picard was a lawyer, socialist reformer, and one of the editors of the avant-garde journal *L'Art Moderne*.[14] Picard's novel is a vehicle for the presentation of his ruminations on the philosophy of law and legal systems. Picard's ideas are spoken by a retired attorney general who lives in the country at La Forge Roussel, a village about fifty kilometers south of Fosset. Khnopff's drawing represents the first appearance of the old lawyer in the book. He was tall, with long white hair, carefully dressed in an old-fashioned manner, holding an umbrella as he advanced through the rainy, mirroring streets.[15] The photogravure technique captures Khnopff's meticulous draftsmanship, evoking the figure in a fine haze of soft marks, perfectly suited to the humid atmosphere. The umbrella is prominent here, as it was in *In Passing, Boulevard du Regent* (fig. 1)—Belgium is known for its frequent rains. The quintessentially urbane Khnopff has nonetheless

5. Fernand Khnopff, illustration to *La Forge Roussel* by Edmond Picard (Brussels: Felix Callewaert Père, 1884).

6. The village of Fosset, seen from the Khnopff family farm.

7. Postcard of the hamlet of Fosset, Tillet.

8. Fosset, entrance to the village.

captured the stoic image of the elderly jurist in his village setting. Khnopff had studied law, and his father was a magistrate in Bruges and then Brussels, so there may be some degree of identification with this figure.

## FOSSET: THE SOLITUDE OF NATURE

Khnopff oscillated between two poles, his home in Brussels, and the family property in Fosset, where he spent many summers as a child and young man. Fosset is a tiny hamlet of about twenty residents set in the hills of the Ardennes, not far from Bastogne. The population has declined from about one hundred in 1900.[16] Khnopff's family owned a large estate here; almost all of his paintings from Fosset are based on land that they possessed. The property was purchased by Khnopff's maternal grandparents, Constant and Aline Dommer, in 1858—the same year the railroad line from Brussels to Bastogne was opened, and the year that Fernand was born at their château in Grembergen. They bought the large farm overlooking the village, several houses in the village, a mill in Fosset, and another in nearby Héropont.[17] Khnopff's mother, Léonie, inherited these properties upon the death of her parents in 1868.[18]

The village consists of a cluster of houses on a small street, shown in Khnopff's 1883 painting *At Fosset. The Village* (plate 99, figs. 6–8). In 1899, he wrote to Paul Schultze-Naumburg that his family retreated "during the summer, to Fosset, a country house in the Belgian Ardennes, silent landscape of heather and forests stretching along the long hills."[19]

In nineteenth-century sources, Fosset is said to be the site of a former Roman army camp "with ditches [*fossés*] and ramparts, whose traces have been found."[20] Fragments of a Roman road are found on the property owned by the Khnopff family.[21] Battles between Julius Caesar and Ambiorix took place in this region.[22] Although isolated and peaceful during Khnopff's lifetime, and again today, during the Second World War it was in the path of the fierce struggle of the Battle of the Bulge.[23] Older residents of the village still recall witnessing the violent clashes between the American and German forces.

No part of the Belgian landscape is untouched by human activity; it has been shaped in many ways over the years. Although nature reigns in the Ardennes, it also bears the signs of human design. This is clearly seen in the rows of fir trees that are planted in strict lines, making a kind of natural architecture. It is reminiscent of Charles Baudelaire's poem "Correspondances," one of the defining texts of symbolist aesthetics: "Nature is a living temple..."[24]

Even this quiet corner of nature in Fosset was subject to seasonal disturbances, though. The rapidly sketched painting of floodwaters in Fosset, titled *The Water Rises* (or *The Flood*) of 1881 shows Khnopff's experimentation with restrained color and unusually sketchy and dynamic brushstrokes (plate 98). The scene he depicts is not conventionally picturesque, and certainly not sublime despite the theme of a flood. They are intimate images of a landscape that he knew and loved. Emile Verhaeren observed:

> It is the Ardennes and nothing but the Ardennes that the painter has depicted, not the Ardennes of the tourists with a small stream over the pebbles, a babbling brook, a mossy and grassy foothill, some blasted trees, humps of bare rocks, corners of a picturesque village dominated by a ruin, something romantic and bourgeois for the piano of the dining room of a hotel, but rather the Ardennes of the high plateaus and wide horizons covered with fields of pink heather and green ferns and yellow broom, and solemn fluid lines, immense, extending to infinity as though unfurled from the mountains.[25]

Verhaeren had intimate knowledge of Khnopff's love of the Ardennes; he had visited him and his family in Fosset in 1886. He wrote to Khnopff's brother Georges: "I have taken away—it must be said—the finest impression of Fosset. How well you welcomed me! Thank your parents and Fernand and your good sister. You are all in my memory when I recall these happy hours..."[26]

This was a landscape filled with memories for Khnopff, and he obviously had an emotional attachment to it. In his many paintings, he explored the various moods of the landscape, with its rain, floods, reflections, and twilight. Michel Draguet expressed it this way:

> In his eyes, there is only one landscape: Fosset. He will represent it to infinity, returning to the same places, changing his standpoint slightly, playing the changing moments, not to transform the object through paint as Monet will do in the 1890s, but to awaken new echoes, to make perceptible the nuances of the state of his soul, to reveal another part of the unconscious projected in the world. Fosset escapes anecdote and familiar views; it is the absent which desire makes present.[27]

9. Fernand Khnopff, *In Fosset. Under the Fir Trees*, 1894. Oil on canvas, 65.5 x 44 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 12086.

The village and fields of Fosset provided deeply personal subjects for him, and reminders of simple existential realities.

These ordinary scenes gave him the opportunity to develop his craft, and perhaps explore the restorative power and moods of nature; *At Fosset. In the Rain* is a good example (plate 101). As a practical matter, these scenes were easily accessible, only a short walk from his house. We do not know if he painted these out of doors, or made sketches that were completed in the studio, but the small scale of these works suggests that he could easily have painted them in the open air.[28] Here he could practice his technique, refining his brushstroke and restrained color while he experimented with compositional structures to render space and his vision. Khnopff created his landscapes in a wide variety of media, including oil, pastel, watercolor, pencil, charcoal, and encaustic. The role of these formal experiments has been admirably emphasized by Andrew Marvick, who argues that "these small, insinuating images stand together, I believe, as one of formalist modern abstraction's first, bravest and—perhaps ironically—most sophisticated and consistently realized experiments."[29] However, he understates the emotional and symbolic significance of these landscapes. Khnopff is always oblique and guarded with his symbolism, and these seemingly mundane landscapes reflect his joy in painting for its own sake, his shifting moods, and his personal view of nature. These works correspond to his moods and states of mind at the time of their creation; they are external equivalents to his emotions. Years later, in 1925–34, the American photographer Alfred Stieglitz created a series of photographs of clouds that he titled "Equivalents," reportedly saying: "My cloud photographs are *equivalents* of my most profound life experience, my basic philosophy of life."[30] The identification of forms that can be substituted for emotions in a kind of aesthetic algebra was later endorsed by the modernist photographer Minor White.[31] The example of photography clarifies how Khnopff's realist landscapes are consistent with his overall project of expressing his subjective experience, while jealously guarding his privacy.

The titles of Khnopff's landscapes often emphasize transitional states of weather or time; Emile Verhaeren remarked on this in 1886, and stressed Khnopff's modernity:

> First, it was small panels as meticulous as the background of Gothic paintings: *The Flood, The Fifth Pond, A Fosset, The Oaks of Laval, The Great Road,* but made special by a very modern search for fleeting or radiant light and the temporal aspect of passing things, to wit: *The Sun That Passes, The Autumn Sun, The First Frost, A White Day, Around Noon, Of Dew, Humidity,* etc.

10. Fernand Khnopff, *A Crisis*, 1881. Oil on canvas, 114 x 175 cm, private collection.

Are not these titles, as gathered here, a confession of art and were the most audacious of the impressionists concerned with any other research to be able to formulate their more constant studies? Is not the air the thing to paint in all these canvases, only air, the air alternately saturated with gold, coated with silver, porous with mist, purplish evening, numb with winter? Fernand Khnopff more than anyone was drawn to contemporary research.[32]

These liminal titles continued with *The End of the Day* (1891, plate 103), and later, Khnopff added the dimension of nostalgia with titles such as *Memory of Fosset* (1911, fig. 21), and of course the outstanding series of *Memories of Bruges* (plates 109–12).

Few of Khnopff's paintings of Fosset include figures, but his identification with this region is shown in his large self-portrait of 1881 titled *A Crisis* (fig. 10). A rocky outcrop in the Ardennes provided the backdrop for this picture. The figure is well integrated with the landscape, which was praised by Emile Verhaeren for its "remarkable unity of impression" and wrote: "In the *Crisis*, the young man's head is delicately formulated: expressive, mysterious, anguished. It is a soul that it evidences and tells. It is in no way detached or hard; it bathes in the landscape...the rest: rocks sad, gray sky, bleak..."[33] The image of the sensitive artist gazing into the distance, awaiting a future in a remote and desolate landscape, owes much to the earlier generation of romantic artists such as Caspar David Friedrich, who similarly depicted himself in a self-portrait as a pilgrim in *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (c. 1818, Kunsthalle Hamburg). Symbolist artists and writers emphasized transitional seasons and moments, such as autumn and twilight, which evoked a sense of quiet melancholy with reminders of the passage of time. The gray mists of Belgium evoked subtle moods and introspection.

Khnopff's own adolescent poetry expressed the pessimism and disillusionment that is embodied in *A Crisis*. Khnopff's first major biographer, Louis Dumont-Wilden, declared that his art corresponded exactly to Schopenhauer's pessimistic aesthetic: "he [Khnopff] is perhaps the only one of his contemporaries whose work corresponds exactly with the pessimistic aesthetic as it was formulated by Schopenhauer."[34] In a poem dated June 20, 1875, Khnopff expressed his adolescent angst:

11. Fernand Khnopff, *At Fosset.The Guard Who Waits*, 1883. Oil on canvas, 151 x 176.5 cm, Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, Frankfurt, 1805.

Alas, I have looked throughout all Nature.
I have searched, but in vain, for the great Causateur,
And my eyes weakened and deprived of light
Have seen nothing but Misfortune.[35]

Dumont-Wilden asserted that there was no work of art by Khnopff that did not express sadness.

It may be tempting to see Khnopff's landscapes as merely screens onto which he projects his emotions and fantasies, but Verhaeren's insistence on the dual nature of art should be borne in mind: Khnopff's landscapes both mirror his internal state of mind and also record his studies of external reality, and reflect his efforts to embody these observations in a material form.

Khnopff's largest painting of the environs of Fosset is in the setting of *At Fosset. The Guard Who Waits* of 1883 (fig. 11). Emile Verhaeren praised it as his finest landscape to date in 1886:

Vision of sincere and realistic tones, with its foreground of huge trees all sharpened with its backgrounds carefully depicted—which proves the acuity of the gaze of the painter—all harmonious

12. The corner of the Khnopff house shown in *At Fosset. An Evening.*

13. Fernand Khnopff, *Memories*, 1889. Pastel on paper mounted on canvas, 127 x 200 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 3528.

> with its delicate lights, its lovely greens, its tones so fine, completely personal with its planes compressed in the Gothic manner and which seems to us to result more from a characteristic of the eye than anything else. In addition, it is the land of the Ardennes with plateaus, immense horizon, but miniaturized by small cottages, reduced enclosures of low hedges, villages, and hamlets spread out like toys on a huge carpet.[36]

It is a picture of stillness and solitude, and a tenacious devotion to duty that keeps the guard alert in the rural landscape. He stands beside a sturdy tree in a broad field, with a compressed view of Fosset in the distance in the upper register.

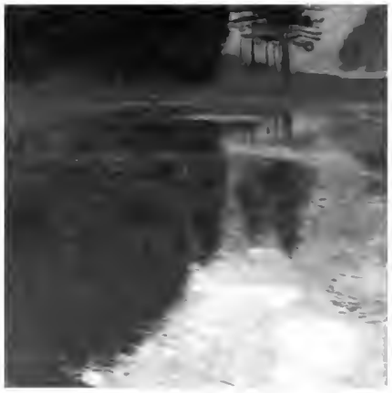
Khnopff's painting *At Fosset. An Evening* of 1886 is equally still, but more mysterious (plate 102). It depicts a scene just outside the wall enclosing the family house in Fosset (fig. 12), a tightly framed and asymmetric background for two female figures in dark dresses. The one in the foreground wears a dark cloak, and her dress covers her ankles and feet, making her seem like an apparition. Both are images of Khnopff's younger sister, and one of his favorite models, Marguerite (1864–1946). This mysterious multiplication of the figure foreshadows Khnopff's extraordinary pastel *Memories* of 1889, which similarly features seven images of Marguerite in the sporting attire of the day, all but one holding tennis rackets (fig. 13). These figures were based on photographs of Marguerite, presumably taken at Fosset. The setting is nearly unchanged today, except for some alterations of the wall. The frame of this picture is quite striking. The wide panels are embossed with patterns resembling Japanese sword-guards. Close examination shows that this raised pattern is actually created by embossed leather, perhaps a wall covering, which the artist painted over.[37] These large paintings with figures are the exception in Khnopff's images of Fosset; most are smaller studies.

14. The former Freson house at Menil, seen from the Khnopff farm at Fosset.

15. Postcard of the pond at Menil.

Khnopff's sister Marguerite married Charles Freson in 1890; his family owned the property next door, less than one kilometer away in Menil. Their house can be seen from the Khnopff property. The Fresons, a family of engineers from Liège, bought the 740-acre estate in 1872.[38] The white farmhouse, the large brick

16. Fernand Khnopff, *Still Water*, 1894. Oil on canvas, 53.5 x 114.5 cm, Oberes Belvedere Galerie, Vienna, 7753.



17. Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), *A Morning by the Pond*, 1899. Oil on canvas, 75.1 x 75.1 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna, LM 2007.

bread oven, and the farm pond are shown in Khnopff's 1891 drawing *The End of the Day* (plate 103, figs. 14–15).

The reflections in still water of the pond foreshadow those in Khnopff's series of *Memories of Bruges* in 1904 (plates 109–12), and are also seen in Khnopff's *Still Water* of 1894. This picture (fig. 16) depicts the trees at the edge of this pond, where he would often visit. This pond is both a mirror, reflecting and refracting surface reality, and also an aid to meditation. Like the interplay of surface and depth found in a mystic's crystal, the mirroring surface invites contemplation. In this pond beside her house, Khnopff's sister and reflections are linked, as they will be in his images of Bruges and its canals, particularly *My Heart Weeps for Days of Yore* (plates 106–7) and *Secret-Reflection* (fig. 22).

Khnopff's *Still Water* was shown at the first exhibition of the Vienna Secession. It was purchased for the Austrian state collections at the recommendation of Gustav Klimt, president of the Secession. Klimt, who was a great admirer of Khnopff's works, shortly thereafter painted a number of similar works, such as *A Morning by the Pond* of 1899 (fig. 17). Khnopff's influence on Klimt—especially in terms of his landscapes—has been widely recognized, but deserves further attention.[39]

The most famous monument at Fosset is the old stone bridge over the Laval River, located just below the Khnopff house. Its three arches are now used as the symbol of the commune of St. Ode, which includes Fosset. This bridge has been said to date to Roman times, but it was probably constructed in the early nineteenth century.[40] Khnopff painted it in 1897, from a somewhat oblique angle (plate 105). The small religious shrine beside the bridge is just visible at right. This was rebuilt after the Second World War, but the bridge remains unchanged (fig. 18). The bridge also appears in one of Khnopff's earliest sketchbooks from 1875 (fig. 19). The ancient stone construction is like the bedrock of this region, linking past to present. This was the only bridge connecting these small communities until a new one was built beside it in 1968; the old bridge was restored in 1996.[41]

Khnopff painted intimate scenes of the rivers near his home several times, including the wonderful small landscape of c. 1890–95 in our exhibition (plate 104). This work captures the bucolic beauty of the flowing stream (fig. 20). It is framed with the same Japanese-influenced embossed border that Khnopff used in *At Fosset. An Evening* (plate 102).

18. Stone bridge at Fosset.

19. Fernand Khnopff, page 1 of sketchbook, 1875. Pencil and ink on paper, 12.2 x 21.8 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, MM8019.

Fosset was the scene of many memories for Khnopff, of seasons and moments from his life there. His landscapes testify to his compulsion to paint and encode his experience on canvas. In 1895 Khnopff provided a brief account of his approach to art in a letter written in Fosset and sent to a newspaper in Berlin:

The composition of my works goes very slowly forward, completely like in a

dream, without sketches and designs, which often give very random effects. It is difficult for me to say when I have completed a work what gave me the first inspiration for it. In vain I have tried to go back to the starting point—but there always comes a moment where the track disappears! I see in my imagination an artificial world, and gradually, very slowly, that which is found there becomes a distinct reality! Then I begin to render that image and search eagerly in reality for such things that most closely match the dream things. I think little of artistic goals and objectives in the representation and in the technique of my works. I paint because I can do nothing else, because I feel that it is my destiny to paint.[42]

20. View of the Laval River, Fosset.

This account of his working method could apply both to his complex allegories and to these realist scenes of nature. Fosset provided Khnopff with a refuge from the modern city, where he could enjoy the privacy and isolation that was such an important theme in his art.[43]

Significantly, he never depicts the workers at the family farm or on the two mills owned by his family. There was a mill for grinding colza oil (similar to rapeseed) on the Laval River near the old bridge during Khnopff's time.[44] The family also purchased another mill in Héropont, just down the road from their farmhouse, in 1873. This appears in a sketchbook of 1879, but he never painted it.[45] Unlike Jean-François Millet or Léon Frederic, his interest was not in the lives of the workers, but in the hushed silence of the fields and streams. The Khnopff family owned their properties in Fosset until 1907. After the death of his parents (his father Edmond died in 1900, and his mother Léonie in 1906), Fernand and his brother Georges and sister Marguerite sold the country estate to Jules Du Jardin, an art critic and painter who had a house near Fernand in Brussels.[46] Du Jardin sold the former Khnopff family farm to Maurice Martens, whose descendants own it to this day. Also in 1907, the Fresons sold the property at Menil, so the remaining connections to Fosset were severed.[47]

Khnopff occasionally returned to reminiscences of Fosset, including a lost encaustic painting, *Memory of Fosset* of 1911 that was exhibited in Venice in 1912 (fig. 21).[48] This title was a bit misleading, as Emile Pirard has discovered that it actually represents a fountain at the nearby village of Sprimont.[49] It was almost certainly painted from a postcard of 1904, which Pirard reproduces. Khnopff also continued to reproduce scenes of Fosset during the war, either from photographs or from memory, such as *At Fosset. Pink Heather* of c. 1916.[50]

## BRUGES—A PORTAL TO THE PAST

The Khnopff family moved to the canal-crossed city of Bruges in 1860, and six years later relocated to Brussels where Khnopff's father was appointed a judge.[51] Initially Fernand, the oldest of the three children, studied law in Brussels, but by 1876 he had left the university for artistic training at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. He studied with the pioneering Belgian symbolist Xavier Mellery and also spent time in Paris between 1877 and 1879, where he discovered the work of contemporary artists such as Gustave Moreau.

Bruges was a focal point of Belgian symbolism, as Dominique Marechal's essay in this volume makes clear. Its moribund buildings were material reminders of the former glory of the Burgundian era and the vicissitudes of fate. For Khnopff it was also a site of cherished memories from his childhood. The still waters of the canals, formerly important commercial arteries, were now more evocative of the symbolic associations of mirrors than of business activities.

Doubles and mirrors appear in many guises in Khnopff's art. The mirror in *My Heart Weeps for Days of Yore*, which was created as a frontispiece to a book of symbolist poetry by Grégoire Le Roy in 1889, is like a magic portal to the past,

21. Fernand Khnopff, *Memory of Fosset*, 1911. Encaustic, location unknown.

22. Fernand Khnopff, *Secret-Reflection*, 1902. Pastel and colored pencil on paper, 49.5 cm diam., and 27.8 x 49 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges, 0000.GRO1232.II-1233.II.

symbolized by the city of Bruges (plates 106–7). The woman kissing the mirror in this image seeks to embrace both her own reflected image and the magic mirror itself, and to enter into the enchanted realm of the past.

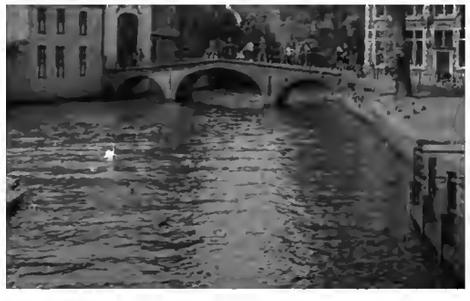
Nostalgia and regret also characterize Khnopff's image of *With Georges Rodenbach. A Dead City* of 1889 (plate 108). This mysterious allegorical work was inspired by the writings of Georges Rodenbach, who would publish the key symbolist novel, *Bruges-la-morte*, in 1892. *A Dead City* features a nude androgynous woman who leans down toward a crown, with some indistinct buildings of Bruges in the background. Emile Verhaeren described Khnopff's works in 1891 as "suggestions of thought," and criticized those vulgar spectators who took too literal a view of his art: "Those who see nothing in [*A Dead City*] but a head leaning on an arm and gazing at a crown, evidently do not know the tendency of the art of M. Khnopff. Objects have...become emblematic. Further, woman...for certain and especially for M. Khnopff...becomes the flesh of ideas and human passions."[52] Dominique Marechal notes that the woman and Bruges both embody stages of life, as well as memory and loss.

Khnopff's earliest depictions of Bruges are more stylized; later ones are extremely realistic. Khnopff must have used photographs for these, particularly since he claimed to have never returned to Bruges after his childhood, not wanting to see how the city had changed. Once however, in 1906, Khnopff was obliged to return to Bruges for an important occasion; Léon Tombu, a fellow artist and friend of Khnopff, reported that Khnopff avoided breaking his self-imposed exile by taking a train to Bruges, there donning spectacles with black lenses and ordering a cab to carry him to his destination.[53] Khnopff was often evasive in his public persona. He denied on several occasions that photography could be of use to artists.[54]

*Secret-Reflection* of 1902 in the Groeningemuseum in Bruges is characteristic of Khnopff's enigmatic art. The sound of the title itself is a reflection, especially in French. It is a diptych, with two panels combined in a single frame (fig. 22). The upper portion shows Khnopff's younger sister Marguerite stroking the lips of a mask of Hypnos with her thumb, as if to erase a secret. This image is based on a photograph of Marguerite taken by Khnopff in his Brussels studio. She is draped in veils that suggest she may be some kind of mystic priestess. The lower panel depicts the lower portion of the Hospital of St. John in Bruges, now the Memling Museum. The waters of the canal form a natural mirror, reflecting the Gothic architecture. In some manner, the hospital and city of Bruges must correspond to the upper image, where the veiled woman and the ivory mask mirror each other. However, we will probably never know the precise nature of any secrets shared by Fernand and Marguerite.

Khnopff executed a series of pictures of *Memories of Bruges* around 1904. These were created in his self-designed house in Brussels, a veritable palace of art (fig. 23). Khnopff's house was one of his most important works of art.[55] Khnopff's obsession with time is shown in the words inscribed over his front door: "Passé—Futur" (Past—Future). As he explained, the present is so fleeting that it barely exists—only the past and future are real.[56] The artist used his memories and photographs to create these works.[57] They were done from a literal and temporal distance from the site of his youth in Bruges, and reverberate with the isolation for which Khnopff was famous. Using commercially available photographs, Khnopff is careful not to reveal anything about his private connections to this city; the seeming objectivity of these images is itself a kind of mask.

23. Fernand Khnopff and Edouard Pelseneer, Khnopff's villa, 41 avenue des Courses, Brussels, 1900–02 (demolished c. 1938).



24. Bruges, entrance to the beguinage.

Many of Khnopff's landscape scenes of Bruges are delicate and beautiful drawings that rival the impressionist views of water scenes painted by Claude Monet. Khnopff's view of the canal in front of the entrance to the beguinage in Bruges (plate 109) recalls Monet's paintings of waterlilies of the same era. The greater precision and detail of Khnopff's work, which stresses the mirror-like solidity of the water's surface instead of the flux and instantaneity of Monet's scenes, suggests a haunting presence of memory beneath the surface of the picture.

The bridge at the entrance to the beguinage, a semi-cloistered residence for the devout women who resided there, not nuns but laywomen following the guidance of a priest, provided a motif for one of his finest landscapes. The water is like a moat, with the bridge promising access, but the closed door of the walled community withholding it (plate 109, fig. 24). This combination of invitation and refusal was found in many of his pictures, including the remarkable portrait of his sister Marguerite in 1887 (King Baudouin Foundation, Brussels, permanent deposit in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium). Her cold but sensual pose is both open and guarded at the same time. Significantly, Khnopff had the portrait glazed from the beginning, so that the glass of the frame would not only protect the painting, but provide a mirroring surface.[58]

25. H. Clerget, *Baptistry of Notre Dame*, wood engraving of a drawing from a photograph, in Lemonnier, *La Belgique*, 384.

26. Bruges, canal.

The medieval architecture of Bruges was wonderfully preserved, and the declining population of the city in the nineteenth century made it seem ever more like a ghost town.[59] He wrote: "In Bruges, indeed, everything reminds us of death; one cannot make a step without bumping into human dust; life itself, doleful and deaf, seems to suffer in advance from the universal decomposition."[60] Camille Lemonnier compared the oblivion that submerged Bruges through the centuries to the lava that overtook Pompeii and Herculaneum.[61]

Lemonnier penned a haunting description of Bruges, replete with imagery that would resurface in the writings of Georges Rodenbach (especially *Bruges-la-morte*), and the works of Fernand Khnopff. Lemonnier wrote:

> In Bruges, in fact, we can follow in the flow of the water most of the history of the city: as in a magic mirror where old images would rise from the dark depths of the centuries, the past is reflected in the dormant stream of canals, with a regret of fainting, a fading of vague and distant tones which, better than the hard brilliance of light, suits its spectral glory. Everything here is mystery: even the name of the streets and docks has a poetry of silence and recollection. Remember this Lake of Love, close to the Beguinage where it seems to mirror tranquility, with its soothing coolness of solitude, so helpful for wounded hearts.[62]

The evocative combination of stone and water, and the beautiful Gothic and Northern Renaissance designs were perfectly suited to Khnopff's style and personal inclinations.

This dichotomy is also found in Khnopff's drawing *In Bruges. A Portal* (plate 111). Dominique Marechal notes that the wall divided the secular realm of the Lords of Gruuthuse from the religious sphere of the Church of Notre Dame. This wall was present at the time of Khnopff's painting, but no longer exists (fig. 25).

Khnopff's drawing of the brick architecture of the *Vrije* (Liberty) of Bruges along a canal (plate 110) is uncannily like the photographs of the scene published in *Bruges-la-morte*, except for the closer cropping. This scene was frequently pho-

27. D. Lancelot, *The Liberty of Bruges, Seen from the Quai des Marbriers*, wood engraving of a drawing from a photograph, in Lemonnier, *La Belgique*, 373.

28. Canal and Minnewater (behind the bridge), Bruges.

tographed and published, including in Camille Lemonnier's *La Belgique* in 1888 (figs. 26–27).

To cite only one more example, Khnopff's large drawing of the Minnewater, or Lac d'Amour, in Bruges depicts another of the most popular tourist views of the city, and crops it closely to focus on the mirroring reflections in the foreground, anchored by the remnants of the medieval fortification at left and the arches of a bridge in the middle ground (plate 112, fig. 28). The title of this work is a bit misleading, as it is not actually the Minnewater depicted here—that lies behind the bridge. Themes of nature, seclusion, and connection are once again evoked. In the background is the hazy image of the Cathedral of Our Lady, which adds a spiritual dimension.

No people can be seen in any of these later portrayals of Bruges; the city is seemingly devoid of human life. Rodenbach's novel *Bruges-la-morte* uses the medieval architecture of the city as a symbolic setting for the human drama it describes, but Khnopff seemingly does not want to share his memories of Bruges with any other persons. Bruges was on the cusp of modernization, with the influx of foreign tourists and the construction of the new port of Zeebrugge that opened in 1907, bringing commercial activity to the edge of Bruges.[63]

## A SCENE FROM THE BELGIAN COAST

As noted previously, Khnopff never painted scenes of laborers. The closest he came to this theme was his seascape of *The Shrimp Fisherman* of c. 1912 (plate 113). The overriding theme here is not of labor, however, but the delicate nuances of the seascape—the only one ever created by Khnopff. The solitary fisherman, catching shrimp in the traditional manner with a net in the surf, is small, and embodies the typical isolation that characterized Khnopff's art. His figure is mirrored in the surf, embedded in a taut composition with the horizon dividing the picture in a ratio nearly, but not quite, matching the golden section. Again the abstract geometry of Khnopff's composition seems quite modern, anticipating the abstraction of artists such as Piet Mondrian. Khnopff was aware of the new trends in art, as well as being steeped in the history of the old masters. The Belgian artist Marcel Baugniet (1896–1995), who studied with Khnopff from 1918 to 1920, credits Khnopff's teaching for leading him toward his mature constructivist style. Khnopff advised Baugniet that his pictures would be improved if he were to underline the force lines: "Il faut souligner les lignes de force." Force lines were of course a favorite item of the Italian futurists, whose brash art was so unlike that of the aging symbolist. Khnopff did balance his prescription for Baugniet, however, by instructing him to begin his analysis of force lines by considering *The School of Athens* by Raphael.[64]

29. Fernand Khnopff, *The Old Woman in Winter*, c. 1916. Charcoal and colored pencil on paper, 24.5 x 30 cm, private collection.

## CODA: BELGIUM UNDER THE OCCUPATION

The years of the First World War were extremely difficult for Belgians who endured the German occupation from 1914 to 1918. Even a wealthy individual such as Khnopff was affected by shortages and loss of freedom. He had always been an internationalist, admiring the art and culture of England, France, Germany, and Austria, so the conflict must have shaken his world view. His calls for artistic reparations in published articles after the war reflect his bitterness.[65] The trauma of the war was reflected in a number of religious paintings, as the artist sought comfort in traditional imagery, and also in a number of landscapes that are imbued with the sorrows of the war.[66] Khnopff drew several images of the land shrouded with snow, with individuals struggling, such as in *The Old Woman in Winter* (fig. 29). Although this landscape seems to recall Fosset, the family properties no longer belonged to him, so this is either

based on memory, or depicts some scene outside Brussels, perhaps Tervuren.

The spare delicacy of this drawing is evocative of Japonisme. The empty space of the composition produces an effect of Zen-like meditative quiet. Japanese art was highly popular in Belgian art circles in the late nineteenth century, and Khnopff was deeply influenced by the elegant simplicity and love of nature found in Asian art.[67] Most of the drawing is white, indicating the heavy snow cover that blankets the terrain and creates a hushed atmosphere. The horizon is high, leaving only a small band of leaden sky at the top. The solitary woman carrying a basket in the snow is heavily swathed against the cold as she follows a faint path through the field. Her small, unbowed form echoes the bare tree that stands firm as it endures the long winter. Khnopff's exquisite drawing technique is evident in the subtlety with which the woman's figure is rendered, and the delicate touches forming the tree and its snow-frosted branches. The long horizontal of the skyline, broken with short verticals, makes a taut modernist composition worthy of Mondrian. The sky is a wash of nuanced color, though it does not clash with the overall monochromatic effect. Khnopff's drawing skills are unmatched. The smoothly modulated marks of pencil, charcoal, and crayon make the image seem to appear on the page as if by magic, the image fused with the surface of the paper. The perfect union of image and materials is one of the key features of his symbolist style.

30. Fernand Khnopff, *The Miller*, 1917. Drawing in Khnopff's copy of Emile Verhaeren, *Toute la Flandre* (Brussels: Deman, 1911). Charcoal and colored pencil on paper, 12.9 x 8.9 cm, Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp, MPM.V.V.294.002.

31. Fernand Khnopff, *Death as a Reaper, or The Shadows*, 1917. Drawing in Khnopff's copy of Emile Verhaeren, *Les blés mouvants*. Pencil, charcoal, and colored pencil on paper, 13.5 x 8.5 cm, Museum Plantin-Moretus, Antwerp, MPM.V.V.328.001.

Khnopff also made more explicit reference to the war. In 1917 he added a drawing in his copy of Emile Verhaeren's *Toute la Flandre*, now in the Museum Plantin-Moretus in Antwerp (fig. 30). Once again literature was the inspiration for his drawing, but this is only a vehicle for his imagery expressing his feelings about the war. His drawing shows a windmill in the background, a symbol of the golden age of Belgium and the Netherlands, and the foreshortened figure of a miller who has collapsed in despair in the foreground. That same year Khnopff added a drawing of death as the grim reaper to his copy of Verhaeren's *Les blés mouvants*, also in the Museum Plantin-Moretus (fig. 31). This may be the closest Khnopff came to depicting peasant workers, but they are transformed into allegories. These are also a kind of memorial to his friend; Verhaeren died in November 1916, falling beneath a train in Rouen.

A small harbinger of hope is suggested by his sketch of *Seagulls in front of the Royal Palace of Brussels* of 1917 (fig. 32). The patriotic majesty of the Royal Palace, a construction from the heady ambitions of the nineteenth century, now closed during the occupation, forms the background to a flock of seagulls who are cast as the prophets of better days in a poem by Khnopff's friend Paul Errera. This poem, written on the back of the sheet of paper with Khnopff's drawing, identifies the white gulls as the symbol of hope.[68] The seagulls returning to the city carry the message of an end to the disaster of war, like the dove returning to the ark in the story of Noah that signaled the end of the flood.

32. Fernand Khnopff, *Seagulls in front of the Royal Palace of Brussels*, 1917. Pencil and colored pencil on paper, 23.2 x 29.3 cm, private collection.

The promise of the return of peace is also symbolized in a small illustration for the Bible text of John 16:20 (fig. 33). In the King James Version it reads: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall

33. Fernand Khnopff, illustration for John 16:20, c. 1918. Pencil and charcoal on paper, 6 x 10 cm, private collection.

weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." The drawing features a Pre-Raphaelite-looking woman in front of what appears to be the coastline of England with its white cliffs. She holds poppies in her hand, and leans on an anchor, a traditional symbol of faith. Khnopff had faith that the British and their allies would prevail, and that peace would return to Belgium. Landscape alone could not convey his emotional message in this case.

Khnopff's landscapes reflect his experiences at every stage of his life, and serve as an index of his artistic development and a kind of surrogate autobiography. As Emile Verhaeren asserted at the beginning of his career, landscape kept Khnopff grounded, but also gave him scope for self-realization and introspection. He traced his observations and memories through the depiction of settings that had deep personal significance to him. Landscape continued to mirror his hopes and dreams. They are in fact his most personal creations, apart from his portraits of family members, and embody another aspect of his symbolist quest to find material counterparts to his states of mind and subjective experiences. Landscape is not incidental to Khnopff's art, but fundamental.

1 Michel Draguet, "Un Ardenne de rêve: Khnopff et le paysage," in *La construction des paysages nationaux*, ed. Claire Billen and Julie Versele (Brussels: Université libre de Bruxelles, Centre d'études canadiennes, 2001), 139–53. Also Michel Draguet, *Khnopff, ou L'ambigu poétique* (Brussels: Crédit Communal; Paris: Flammarion, 1995). Guy Grosjean, "Khnopff à Fosset ou les nuances du filigrane intime," *De la Meuse à l'Ardenne* 42 (2010): 117–36. Dominique Marechal, "Eternity Reflected Motionless in the Water: Fernand Khnopff; From Bruges to Fosset," in *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921)*, ed. Frederik Leen, Dominique Marechal, Sophie van Vliet et al., exh. cat. (Brussels: Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, 2004), 35–44. Andrew Marvick, "'Something Incomprehensible': Formalist Modernism and the Real in the Landscapes of Fernand Khnopff," in *Symbolism, Its Origins and Its Consequences*, ed. Rosina Neginsky (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 159–68.

2 Emile Pirard, *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921) à Fosset: Ménil, Sprimont, Héropont...* (Tillet: Les Amis de Kingasani, 2012). This small book was published for the benefit of the charity in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. I am grateful to Dominique Marechal for generously sharing his copy with me.

3 Katharine Lochnan with Roald Nasgaard and Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov, eds., *Mystical Landscapes: From Vincent van Gogh to Emily Carr*, exh. cat. (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 2016).

4 See the catalogue raisonné by Robert L. Delevoy, Catherine De Croës, and Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, *Fernand Khnopff: Catalogue de l'œuvre* (Brussels: Cosmos Monographies, 1979; 2nd rev. ed. Brussels: Lebeer Hossmann, 1987).

5 Gustave Courbet, letter to the young artists of Paris, Dec. 25, 1861, in *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, ed. and trans. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 203. Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (1818) became a key source of symbolist aesthetics; see Michelle Facos, *Symbolist Art in Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 49–52.

6 "Inscape" was a term coined by the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–99). See W. H. Gardner, "Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Poetry of Inscape," *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory* 33 (Oct. 1969): 1–16.

7 Emile Verhaeren, *Quelques notes sur l'œuvre de Fernand Khnopff* (Brussels: Mme. le Vve. Monnom, 1887), 18. This publication is a compilation of articles published in *L'Art Moderne* in 1886–87: 6, no. 36 (Sept. 5, 1886): 281–82; 6, no. 37 (Sept. 12, 1886): 289–90; 6, no. 41 (Oct. 10, 1886): 321–23; 7, no. 17 (Apr. 24, 1887): 129–31. This translation is mine, as are all that follow, except where noted otherwise: "Depuis ses débuts jusqu'à cette heure, Fernand Khnopff a traité le paysage. Nous espérons qu'il ne l'abandonnera jamais, surtout aujourd'hui qu'il s'enfonce

dans le grand rêve. La nature doit lui servir de rappel à la réalité, sans cesse, sinon il est à craindre qu'il ne fasse un œuvre incomplet. On ne peut se passer entièrement de réel pour la même raison qu'on ne peut se dégager entièrement de l'au-delà. L'art est une unité à deux faces; comme la divinité catholique est en trois personnes, lui est en deux."

8 Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Khnopff's *In Passing* is discussed on pages 97–99.

9 Verhaeren, *Quelques notes sur l'œuvre de Fernand Khnopff*, 13–14. "En 1882, *En passant* (boulevard du Régent). La préoccupation de la scène prise sur le vif, du coin de ville à physionomiser, monte dans l'esprit du peintre. Il tâche de rendre l'air ambiant, les arbres, le vert lavé de leur écorce, l'aspect des trottoirs, la façade des maisons et surtout les promeneurs, les flâneurs, les passants, chacun avec son allure, son pas, son geste ou sa 'dégaine.'"

10 Verhaeren, 16. "Cette tentative de modernité extérieure à traduire, fut renouvelée en 1883. Nouvelle scène de boulevard: *En passant vers six heures*. Elle est supérieure à la précédente, quoiqu'elle ne tienne pas dans l'œuvre entier du peintre."

11 Yoko Takagi, "Symbolist Fernand Khnopff and Japonisme," in *Japonisme in Fin de Siècle Art in Belgium* (Antwerp: Pandora, 2002), 167–200.

12 Letter from Fernand Khnopff to Paul Schultze-Naumburg, Feb. 1899; printed in facsimile in Delevoy, De Croës, and Ollinger-Zinque, *Fernand Khnopff*, 27. "Pendant l'été, au château de Grembergen, détruit à présent, ainsi que son beau parc dont j'aimais tant les silencieuses pièces d'eau, les statues et les grands arbres."

13 *La Forge Roussel* was published in Brussels by Felix Callewaert Père, in an edition of 310. Khnopff's illustrations were reproduced by photogravure by Evely, with the prints pulled by Bauwens.

14 See Paul Aron and Cécile Vanderpelen-Diagre, *Edmond Picard (1836–1924): Un bourgeois socialiste belge à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle; Essai d'histoire culturelle* (Brussels: Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, 2013).

15 Picard, *La Forge Roussel*, 27–28, carefully described the old lawyer's appearance: "Au milieu de la rue empierrée, boueuse et miroitante, s'avançait un vieillard de haute taille vêtu d'une redingote tombante, boutonnée, cravaté de blanc, la tête couverte d'un de ces chapeaux bas à larges bords que l'on portait vers 1830. Il était maigre. De longs cheveux blancs, terminés en boucles, couvraient le col de son vêtement. Il avait le visage pâle, soigneusement rasé, légèrement parcheminé. Le nez était fort et recourbé en bec d'aigle. La physionomie était noble et grave."

16 Pirard, *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921) à Fosset*, 26.

17 Pirard, 44, 13.

18 Pirard, 17.

19 Letter from Fernand Khnopff to Paul Schultze-Naumburg, Feb. 1899 in Delevoy, De Croës, and Ollinger-Zinque, *Fernand Khnopff*, 27. "Pendant l'été, à Fosset, une maison de campagne dans les Ardennes belges, paysage silencieux de bruyères et de de bois étendues sur de longues collines."

20 *Bulletin de la Commission Centrale de Statistique* 9 (1866): 207: "*Fosset*, dénomination se rattachant à un ancien camp romain, avec *fossés* et retranchement, dont les traces ont été retrouvées."

21 Pirard, *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921) à Fosset*, 52.

22 *Mémoires de la Société d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de la Moselle* 4 (1862): 284.

23 See Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anthony Walton, *Brothers in Arms: The Epic Story of the 761st Tank Battalion, WWII's Forgotten Heroes* (New York: Broadway Books, 2005), 187–201. Also William C. Sylvan and Francis G. Smith Jr., *Normandy to Victory: The War Diary of General Courtney H. Hodges and the First U.S. Army*, ed. John T. Greenwood (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 213–303. References in the books are to Tillet, the adjacent village. The German forces were pushed back by the 87th Infantry and the 761st Tank Division, an all-black unit. On April 9, 2017, I spoke with a resident of Fosset who was ten years old at the time of the Battle of the Bulge, who shared his still strong memories of that time.

24 Charles Baudelaire, "Correspondances," in *Les fleurs du mal* (Paris: Poulet-Malassis and de Broise, 1857); see Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 10–11.

25 Verhaeren, *Quelques notes sur l'œuvre de Fernand Khnopff*, 18–19. "C'est l'Ardenne et rien que l'Ardenne que le

peintre a traduit, non pourtant l'Ardenne des touristes avec un petit ruisseau sur cailloux, un babillis d'eau, un pied de colline moussue et herbeuse, quelques arbres effrités, des bosses de roches à nu, des coins de ville pittoresque dominée par une ruine, un quelque chose de romantique et de bourgeois pour piano de salle à manger d'hôtel, mais l'Ardenne des hauts plateaux et des larges horizons et des étendues roses de bruyère et jaunes de fougère et vertes de genêt, et des lignes solennelles, souples, immenses, s'étendant à l'infini comme si on avait déplié des montagnes."

26 Emile Verhaeren, letter to Georges Khnopff, Sept. 8, 1886; quoted in Draguet, *Khnopff, ou L'ambigu poétique*, 168. "J'ai importé—faut-il le dire—la meilleure impression de Fosset. Comme vous m'accueillez bien! Remercie tes parents et Fernand et ta bonne sœur. Vous êtes tous là dans ma mémoire quand je me rappelle les heures heureuses."

27 Draguet, *Khnopff, ou L'ambigu poétique*, 41. "A ses yeux, il ne peut avoir qu'une paysage: Fosset. Il le représentera à l'infini, revenant aux mêmes endroits, modifiant légèrement les mises en place, jouant d'instants changeants, non pour métamorphoser l'objet soumis à la peinture comme le fera Monet dans les années 1890, mais pour éveiller de nouveaux échos, pour nuancer sensiblement l'état d'âme, pour révéler une autre part de l'inconscient projeté dans le monde. Fosset échappe à l'anecdote et aux vues entendues; il est l'absent que le désire rend présent."

28 Marechal, "From Bruges to Fosset," 42.

29 Marvick, "'Something Incomprehensible,'" 165.

30 Alfred Stieglitz, quoted in Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (New York: Aperture, 1990), 132.

31 Minor White, "Equivalence: The Perennial Trend" (1963): "When the photographer shows us what he considers to be an Equivalent, he is showing us an expression of a feeling, but this feeling is not the feeling he had for the object that he photographed. What really happened is that he recognized an object or series of forms that, when photographed, would yield an image with specific suggestive powers that can direct the viewer into a specific and known feeling, state or place within himself." Quoted in John Pultz, "Equivalence, Symbolism, and Minor White's Way into the Language of Photography," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 39, no. 1/2 (1980): 29.

32 Verhaeren, *Quelques notes sur l'œuvre de Fernand Khnopff*, 19–20. "D'abord, c'était des petits panneaux minutieux comme des fonds gothiques: *la Crue, le Cinquième étang, A Fosset, les Chênes de Laval, la Grand'route*, mais spécialisés par une recherche très moderne de lumière fugace ou radiante et d'aspect horaire et passager des choses, à preuve: *Du soleil qui passe, Du soleil d'automne, les Premiers froids, Un jour blanc, Vers midi, De la rosée, De l'humidité*, etc.

"Ces titres ne sont-ils point, rassemblés ainsi, une confession d'art et les plus audacieux des impressionnistes se sont-ils inquiété d'autres recherches pour arriver à formuler leurs plus constantes études? L'air n'est-il point la chose à peindre dans toutes ces toiles, l'air seul, l'air tour à tour saturé d'or, lamé d'argent, poreux de brume, violacé de soir, transi d'hiver? Fernand Khnopff a donc été plus que n'importe qui sollicité par la recherche contemporaine."

33 Verhaeren, 12–13. "Dans la *Crise*, la tête du jeune homme est délicatement formulée: expressive, mystérieuse, angoissée. C'est une âme qu'elle prouve et raconte. Elle n'est en rien découpée ni dure; elle baigne dans le paysage...le reste: roches tristes, ciel grisâtre, terrain morne..."

34 Louis Dumont-Wilden, *Fernand Khnopff* (Brussels: G. van Oest, 1907), 32. See also Jeffery Howe, *The Symbolist Art of Fernand Khnopff* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 12–14.

35 Archives of Contemporary Art, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 30614/3. "Hélas, j'ai regardé dans la Nature entière. / J'ai cherché, mais en vain, le grand Causateur, / Et mes yeux affaiblies et privés de lumière / N'ont vu que le Malheur."

36 Verhaeren, *Quelques notes sur l'œuvre de Fernand Khnopff*, 20. "Vision tonte sincère et réelle, avec son avant-plan d'arbres énormes, toute aiguë avec ses fonds minutieusement traités—ce qui prouve l'acuité du regard du peintre—toute harmonieuse avec ses clairs délicats, ses verts charmants, ses tons si fins, toute personnelle avec ses plans rapprochés à la manière gothique et qui nous semble résulter bien plus d'une caractéristique de l'œil que de tout autre chose. De plus, c'est le pays ardennais des plateaux, immense d'horizon, mais minusculisé par de petites chaumières, des réductions d'enclos à haies basses, des villages et des hameaux étalés comme des jouets sur un énorme tapis."

37 Edwin Becker, "White, Blue and Gold: In Search of New Harmony," in *In Perfect Harmony: Picture + Frame 1850–1920*, ed. Eva Mendgen, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 1995), 202.

38 Pirard, *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921) à Fosset*, 95.

39 The comparison of these two landscapes was made by Draguet, *Khnopff, ou L'ambigu poétique*, 336. The most extensive investigation of the relationship of Khnopff and Klimt is by Joanna Seidelmann, "Die künstlerischen Beziehungen zwischen der Wiener Secession und Brüssel um 1900: Fernand Khnopff in Wien und sein Einfluss auf Gustav Klimt" (master's thesis, Universiteit Wien, 2011). See also *Fernand Khnopff et ses rapports avec la Secession viennoise*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Centre international pour l'Etude du XIX$^{e}$ siècle, 1987). Also Michel Draguet, "Khnopff and Klimt," in *Gustav Klimt, Josef Hoffmann: Pioneers of Modernism*, ed. Agnes Husslein-Arco and Alfred Weidinger, exh. cat. (Munich: Prestel, 2011), 252–73.

40 Pirard, *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921) à Fosset*, 47.

41 Pirard, 44–46.

42 [Fernand Khnopff], Extracts of a letter sent from Fosset to an unknown recipient, in *Amsler & Ruthardt's Wochenberichte: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Kunst, Kunsthandel und Kunstgewerbe* 3, no. 40 (Aug. 31, 1895): 280.

43 Leslie Dixon Morrisey, "Fernand Khnopff: The Iconography of Isolation and the Aesthetic Woman" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1974). Also, Alex Ross, "*On n'a que soi*: Introspection and Self-Absorption as Themes in the Art of Fernand Khnopff," *Canadian Journal of Netherlandic Studies/Revue canadienne d'études néerlandaises* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1998): 8–30.

44 Pirard, *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921) à Fosset*, 49.

45 Reproduced in *Fernand Khnopff et ses rapports avec la Secession viennoise*, 20.

46 Jules Du Jardin lived at 22 avenue des Courses in Brussels; Fernand at 41; see Pirard, *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921) à Fosset*, 21.

47 Pirard, 95.

48 Reproduced in Ugo Ojetti, *La decima Esposizione d'arte a Venezia—1912* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1912), 268, and in Delevoy, De Croës, and Ollinger-Zinque, *Fernand Khnopff*, 370.

49 Pirard, *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921) à Fosset*, 65–66.

50 Private collection; reproduced in Delevoy, De Croës, and Ollinger-Zinque, *Fernand Khnopff*, no. 572, 392.

51 The Khnopff family history in Bruges was definitively documented by Marechal, "From Bruges to Fosset," 37.

52 Emile Verhaeren, "Les XX," *La Société Nouvelle* (Brussels) 6, no. 1 (1890): 112. "Celui qui ne voit dans *les Villes mortes* qu'une tête appuyée sur le bras et regardant une couronne, ne saisit évidemment pas la tendance d'art de M. Khnopff. Les objets...sont devenus emblématiques. De plus, la femme...pour certains et spécialement pour M. Khnopff...devient com me *la chair des idées et des passions humaines*."

53 Léon Tombu, *Peintres et sculpteurs belges à l'aube du XX$^{me}$ siecle* (Liège: A. Bénard, 1907), 93.

54 See Fernand Khnopff, "Is Photography among the Fine Arts?—A Symposium," *Magazine of Art* 23 (1899): 156–58; essentially repeated in 1916: Fernand Khnopff, "A propos de la photographie dite d'art" (address given on June 8, 1916), *Annexe aux Bulletins de la Classe des Beaux-Arts: Communications Présentées à la Classe en 1915–1918* (1919): 93–99. Both available on the website *Fernand Khnopff: Writings on Art and Artists*, ed. and trans. Jeffery Howe (Chestnut Hill: Boston College, 2016), https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:107202.

55 Clément Dessy, "La maison d'artiste en portrait, manifeste et sanctuaire: L'exemple de Fernand Khnopff," in *The Aesthetics of Matter: Modernism, the Avant-Garde and Material Exchange*, ed. Sarah Posman, Anne Reverseau, David Ayers, Sascha Bru, and Benedikt Hjartarson (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 235–48. Also, Michel Draguet, "Fernand Khnopff," in *In the Temple of the Self: The Artist's Residence as a Total Work of Art; Europe and America 1800–1948*, ed. Margot Th. Brandlhuber and Michael Buhrs, exh. cat. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013), 228–43.

56 Maria Biermé, "Fernand Khnopff," *La Belgique Artistique et Littéraire* 8 (July–Sept. 1907): 96: "Si l'on s'étonne de cette devise, le maître répond que le présent est chose si fugitive!" Another visitor wrote: "My eyes fall on the inscription: Passé—Futur. Its meaning is clear to me now for the mystery of Khnopff's art has revealed itself. Our life lies in the past, our longings in the future, there is no present, but that which we call existence is made up only of memories and hopes. The instant is fleeting, it is and is no more, our business, our words are matters of indif-

ference, only the dreams are true and everlasting and reality is a passing shadow." See Wolfram Waldschmidt, "The House of a Symbolist," *House and Garden* 10, no. 2 (Aug. 1906): 90.

57 Commercial postcards and the photographs illustrating Rodenbach's *Bruges-la-morte* were used by Khnopff. See Dominique Marechal, "Bruges as a Crossroads of European Symbolism" in this volume, and Anne Adriaens-Pannier, "Fernand Khnopff and Photography," in Leen et al., *Fernand Khnopff*, 249–52. Joël Goffin suggests that the photos of Gustave Hermans inspired Khnopff's renderings, "Gustave Hermans inspirateur de Fernand Khnopff?," *Bruges-la-mortes: Un conte iniatique*, July 30, 2007, http://bruges-la-morte.net/wp-content/uploads/Gustave-Hermans-inspirateur-de-Fernand-Khnopff.pdf. See also Jeffery Howe, "Fernand Khnopff's Depictions of Bruges: Mysticism, Medievalism and Socialism," *Arts Magazine* 55, no. 4 (Dec. 1980): 126–31.

58 See Reinhold Heller, "Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface," *Art Journal* 45, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 151.

59 Camille Lemonnier notes that the population of Bruges fell from 51,488 in 1854 to 45,000 in 1880, and continued to decline each year. Women outnumbered men by 6,000 (*La Belgique*, 357).

60 Lemonnier, 356.

61 Lemonnier, 348.

62 Lemonnier, 381. "A Bruges, d'ailleurs, on peut suivre au courant de l'eau presque toute l'histoire de la ville: comme dans un miroir magique où les vieilles images se lèveraient du fond noir des siècles, le passé se réfléchit au flot dormant des canaux, avec un regret d'évanouissement, une estompe de tons vagues et lointains qui, mieux que l'éclat dur de la lumière, conviennent à sa gloire spectrale. Tout ici est mystère: même le nom des rues et des quais a une poésie de silence et de recueillement. Souvenez-vous de ce Lac d'amour, proche du Béguinage dont il semble mirer la tranquillité, avec sa fraîcheur apaisante de solitude, si bien faite pour les cœurs ulcérés."

63 See Sharon L. Hirsh, "The Ideal City, the Dead City," in *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society*, 257–77 for the clashing prospects of Bruges.

64 Interview with Marcel Baugniet, 1978. See Howe, *The Symbolist Art of Fernand Khnopff*, 21–22.

65 Fernand Khnopff, "Les compensations pour dommages artistiques" (address given on Mar. 6, 1919), *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts*, nos. 1–3 (1919): 59–66. See Howe, *Fernand Khnopff: Writings on Art and Artists*.

66 Jeffery Howe, "Religious Themes in the Art of Fernand Khnopff," *Religion and the Arts* 8, no. 4 (2004): 415–57.

67 Takagi, "Symbolist Fernand Khnopff and Japonisme."

68 "Les mouettes devant le Palais Royale," P. Errera, 1917: "Qui nous prévient, tant de mois à l'avance, du / Retour d'un printemps encore lointain et nous laissé / pressentis dans l'nidinale torpeur, le réveil du /prochain renouveau? // Ce n'est pas toi, hirondelle. // Qui nous fait augurer la fin du déluge dont / les flots gris ont submergé le pays, et qui nous / apporte le rameau d'olivier, présage de / temps meilleurs? // Ce n'est pas toi, colombe! // C'est toi, blanche mouette."

# "AND THE CLOUDS STAGNATE. ON THE WATER'S FACE":[1] BRUGES AS A CROSSROADS OF EUROPEAN SYMBOLISM

Dominique Marechal

Bruges is the historical water city par excellence of Belgium, known as the "Venice of the North." The character of this ancient city gradually emerged in the nineteenth century as an international "symbolist symbol," the very image of decadence and past glory.[2] During the Middle Ages Bruges was one of the wealthiest cities in the world, comparable to the current status of New York. Bruges was economically and culturally frozen when its natural link with the sea silted up still farther in the course of the sixteenth century. The drying of this vital "umbilical cord" meant the end of the city's wealth, power, and charisma. Water and sea were its lifeblood, an image diametrically opposed to the mythical characters of Ophelia or Narcissus with whom the city is sometimes associated, and for whom water means death. After all, these two tragic figures, one from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the other from ancient mythology, both drowned.

1. James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), *The Market, Bruges*, 1887. Etching on paper, 9.6 x 13.3 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, F1903.24.

The ambiguities inherent in the motif of the city of Bruges were explored by many symbolist artists. In this essay I will attempt to show how these artists varied the content or style of the Bruges motif, depending on their artistic personality and how the image of the city was used as a vehicle for their creativity.

## PREHISTORY AND EARLY SYMBOLISM: 1815–91

After the Battle of Waterloo (1815), but especially after 1850, a colony of artists of all types found their way to Bruges. Numerous European, including Belgian, visual artists and writers visited the town, not only to create but above all to see the monuments and art treasures and to inhale the unique atmosphere of a decayed medieval glory.

The first to discover Bruges were the British painters and poets. Richard Parkes Bonington and J. M. W. Turner were already there in 1823–24, and British poets such as William Wordsworth sung of the art treasures of Bruges in their verses.[3] At mid-century the Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti wrote several sonnets such as "On Leaving Bruges," and poems about the famous carillon and the paintings of Hans Memling in St. John's Hospital.[4] In the fall of 1849 Rossetti visited Bruges on a crucial trip with his colleague, the painter William Holman Hunt, who in turn underwent the influence of the Flemish primitives.[5] Rossetti published the

2. Fernand Khnopff, sketch for the frontispiece of *Bruges-la-morte*, 1892. Graphite and india ink on cardboard, 10 x 15.5 cm, private collection.

poem "Carillon" with a comment asserting his originality: "The song is, of course, quite original; there is in particular a Yankee of the name of Longfellow with whose works it has no affinity."[6] Rossetti rejected comparison with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's long poem "The Belfry of Bruges" that was published four years earlier.[7]

In 1854 William Morris, the leading figure of the Arts and Crafts movement, and Edward Burne-Jones, the leading symbolist Pre-Raphaelite, admired the museums of Bruges. It should also be noted that Ford Madox Brown studied at the Bruges Academy.

The American expatriate James Abbott McNeill Whistler etched a unique image of the city after his visit in 1887, *The Market, Bruges* (fig. 1), which juxtaposed in mirror image a portion of the city hall and the tower of the Church of Our Lady (*Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk*). The sun casts quivering shadows on the large roof, while silhouettes of women in their typical hooded cloaks cross the market square.[8]

Many French artists also visited Bruges. Victor Hugo was there for a day in 1837[9] and again in 1861, and in 1844 Gustave Courbet signed a drawing after a Flemish Baroque painting that was at the time attributed to Anthony van Dyck.[10] In 1851 Jules de Goncourt made a watercolor of a small bridge in Bruges, a work that was preserved by his brother Edmond as a relic. Auguste Rodin sketched in the Chapel of the Holy Blood during his stay in Belgium (1871–77).[11]

Although Charles Baudelaire, who lived in Belgium from 1864 to 1866, had only disdain for Bruges: "Phantom city, mummified city, vaguely preserved. It smells of death, or the Middle Ages, Venice, the customary ghosts and tombs...,"[12] some of his literary colleagues struck a much more positive tone. Paul Verlaine wrote in 1892: "I have nostalgia for Bruges and its bells, with their muffled ringing."[13] Stéphane Mallarmé gave a lecture to the local literary circle on the symbolist poet Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam in 1890 and put his own fond memories of the city in a hermetic and elliptical sonnet.[14] In November 1892 the Sâr Joséphin Péladan, founder of the *Ordre de la Rose-Croix Catholique* and great promoter of symbolism, spoke on his esoteric occult theories and their relationship to art. In his lecture to an audience of bewildered but open-minded locals, Péladan presented his favorite themes of magic and love, the perfection of androgyny, women, the mystic and religious nature of art, and mystery.[15] When the young adult André Gide in 1891 joined Maurice Maeterlinck on a visit to Ghent, he took the opportunity to also travel to Bruges. In his diary he described his impressions of "the so dismal dejection" of the canals and the streets of Ghent and Bruges.[16]

3. Fernand Khnopff, frontispiece for *Bruges-la-morte* by Georges Rodenbach (Paris: Librarie Marpon & Flammarion, 1892).

## THE INFLUENCE OF RODENBACH ON KHNOPFF, *BRUGES-LA-MORTE*, AND THE PIVOTAL YEAR OF 1892

In contrast to these previously named artists and writers who visited the city briefly, there is at least one important visual artist for whom Bruges was more than a mere motif, namely Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921).[17] His important series of images of Bruges was not at all casual. It was not the result of a brief visit, or even a longer sojourn as with Henri Le Sidaner, but stemmed from his obsessive memories of his childhood years there.[18]

In Khnopff's representations of Bruges we can distinguish two chronological and stylistic groupings: a first set of three different works that date from 1889 to 1892, and a second from 1902 to 1905 that includes nine different drawings and paintings of cityscapes. In some cases the artist depicted variants of the same composition.[19] On three occasions from 1889 to 1892 Khnopff combined

the cityscape with the face of an enigmatic woman. Each was designed as a frontispiece illustration for a literary work, either for Grégoire Le Roy (plates 106–7) or for Georges Rodenbach (plate 108, and figs. 2–3).

In *With Grégoire Le Roy. My Heart Weeps for Days of Yore* (plates 106–7) Khnopff combined the bridge to the beguinage and its mirroring water along with the image of a narcissistic woman who kisses her reflection in a round mirror. Khnopff dedicated this drawing, of which seven versions are known, to his friend the poet Grégoire Le Roy. The drawing was used as the frontispiece for a collection of poems that appeared in 1889. As with many other writers, Le Roy describes the dream-like atmosphere of a dead city so beloved by symbolists, which embodies the yearning and searching for one's self. The narcissistic motif of the mirror reflection was a theme that preoccupied Khnopff for many years. Khnopff regarded the circle as a symbol of perfection.[20]

4. Fernand Khnopff, *Days of Yore* at the Venice Biennale in 1907, no. 35.

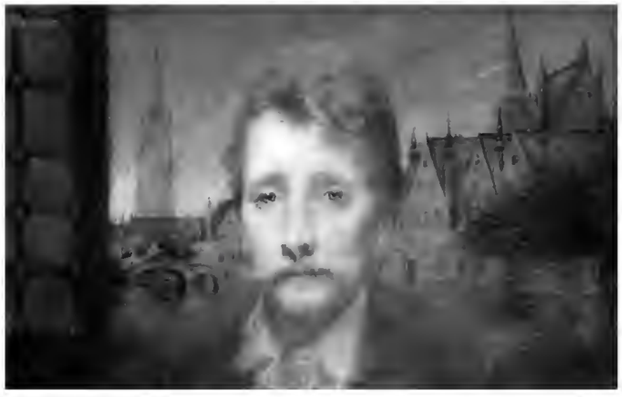
Khnopff was deeply interested in literature and his friendship with the writer Georges Rodenbach (1855–98) exerted a profound influence on his work.[21] As early as 1889 Khnopff dedicated a drawing to Rodenbach, *With Georges Rodenbach. A Dead City*, which features a naked woman in a somber allegory of Bruges (plate 108).[22] She leans down toward a crown on an ancient sculpted pedestal, a metaphor for memory and decay. Because, as Rodenbach writes in the poem "Agonies de villes": "Cities are a little like women. They have their times of youth, of blossoming, and of decline. Bruges is like a deposed queen, today forgotten and impoverished, but once a powerful and magnificent monarch of Europe in former days."[23]

This drawing was completed three years before the novel *Bruges-la-morte*, one of Rodenbach's great literary successes, was published. The book was issued with a frontispiece by Fernand Khnopff (figs. 2–3). Born in Tournai, Rodenbach lived in Paris but based his story in the old quarters of Bruges. With the publication in 1892 of *Bruges-la-morte*, which was translated into many languages, Rodenbach made the city world famous.[24] He depicted a melancholy place of silence, dreams, loneliness, hidden life, mysticism, decadence, and obsession with death. This atmosphere was evoked in a highly refined language replete with images of self-sacrificing beguines, doppelgängers, idealized women and perverse femmes fatales, carillon chimes and lighted windows at dusk, swans on still waters, deserted streets and reflections, mysterious historic buildings shrouded in mist and fog, candles and veils, the heady scent of lilies, perfume, and incense, dead maidens and medieval tombstones, all in a gray claustrophobic atmosphere.

In *Bruges-la-morte* the city plays the role of a full-fledged character. Rodenbach wrote in the preface that "in reality Bruges appears almost like a human being." The book was illustrated with numerous black and white photos of the most picturesque spots so that the reader "would feel the shadow of the oblong towers stretching on the text."[25] The city was intended to correspond to the dead wife of the grieving main character, Hugues Viane, just as Khnopff depicted her in his frontispiece for the novel (figs. 2–3). The dead woman is laid out, her long locks flowing loose, with the beguinage bridge in the background; this correspondence is the central theme of the novel.

The combination of the city of Bruges and a woman appears again in the very elaborate three-part drawing *Days of Yore* that is now only known through photographs (fig. 4). Three drawings were mounted in one triptych, with the central figure of a "priestess" in a richly decorated robe drinking from a chalice (fig. 5). In the background of the central panel we see St. John's Hospital along the water at left. In the middle of that panel is the gilt silver shrine of the Holy Blood. In this reliquary is a vial filled with the relic of the Holy Blood, which has been carried annually in a procession around the city for centu-

5. Fernand Khnopff, *Days of Yore*, 1905. Photograph highlighted with colored pencil on cardboard, 21.8 x 28.3 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 11.529.



6. Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer, *Portrait of Georges Rodenbach*, c. 1895–96. Pastel on paper, 36 x 55 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, RF 39677.

7. Georges Rodenbach.

8. Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer, *Bruges, Snow Effect*, c. 1900. Pastel on paper, 53 x 42 cm, private collection.

ries. It is no coincidence that this religious procession is also central to the plot of *Bruges-la-morte*.[26] On the left wing of the triptych there was a drawing of the canal *Groene Rei* (see also Khnopff's similar drawing *Memory of Flanders. A Canal* of 1904 [plate 110]). On the right wing was a representation of the tomb sculpture of the Duchess Mary of Burgundy which is in the Church of Our Lady in Bruges.[27]

## FIN-DE-SIÈCLE BRUGES: 1892–1902

The French symbolist Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer (1865–1953) created a pastel, *Portrait of Georges Rodenbach*, in about 1895–96 (fig. 6). The portraitist and sitter (fig. 7) were friends. The dreamy Rodenbach stands in front of an imaginary panorama, made up of a combination of various city views. Lévy-Dhurmer also designed eighteen pastel drawings with atmospheric scenes of Bruges (fig. 8), which would be used much later as color illustrations for a re-edition of *Bruges-la-morte*.[28]

With the publication of *Bruges-la-morte*, 1892 was a pivotal year for the development of Bruges as a symbol, and there was a corresponding rise in the number of visitors as a result. In that same year Xavier Mellery

9. Xavier Mellery, *Bruges*, c. 1890. Oil on canvas, 73.5 x 47.5 cm (wings), 74 x 24 cm (center), Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 3910.

10. Albert Baertsoen, *The Speelmansrei in Bruges*, 1895. Oil on canvas, 131 x 158 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges, 0000.GRO0009.I.

exhibited his triptych *Bruges* (fig. 9) at the penultimate exhibition of the avant-garde group *Les XX* in Brussels. Mellery (1845–1921) was Khnopff's teacher and an artist who strove to evoke silence and "the soul of things" in his works. He was also enamored of Bruges, which is reflected in this triptych. Mellery's use of the triptych form—the religious format par excellence—was a manner of sacralizing this work, which Léon Frederic would also utilize. The unusually wide side panels are adorned with interior views of the fifteenth-century Jerusalem Chapel, a jewel of the late Gothic era in Bruges. On the smaller central panel is an allegory of the city, represented by a woman with a violin and bow peering at the belfry from a Gothic pedestal, while one putto offers consolation to his weeping brother.[29] Mellery also repeatedly developed the motif of the otherworldly beguines in some very dark and subtle drawings. These somber sisters had a particular symbolic value for him that unconsciously recalled images related to Bruges (plate 78).

11–12. Georges de Feure, illustrations for "Petits nocturnes de Bruges" by Georges Rodenbach in *L'Image* 6 (May 1897).

We should also briefly mention several lesser-known Belgian artists such as Alexandre Hannotiau (1863–1901), Omer Coppens (1864–1926), and Joseph Middeleer (1865–1934).[30] And although Albert Baertsoen (1866–1922) was very attached to his native city of Ghent, he painted a large and quite exceptional canvas of Bruges with a view on the canal *Speelmansrei* with the *Sleutelbrug* (Key Bridge) and St. Jacob's Church visible in the background (fig. 10). The framing of the composition with its emphasis on the reflection is quite striking, even daring. Baertsoen's emotionally laden city views are typically suffused with an atmosphere of sadness and melancholy, because they often depict ancient and endangered neighborhoods.

During his short and intense symbolist period William Degouve de Nuncques (1867–1935) also painted several strange and hallucinatory views of Bruges. In *Night at Bruges* from 1897 the oppressive atmosphere that would develop much later in surrealism is already evident.[31] As in a nightmare, rays of light stream from some windows along the ghostly water exuding an oppressive, unspoken fear that could be inspired by the works of Maurice Maeterlinck. Although we cannot identify precisely the view shown in Degouve's *Canal, Bruges* (plate 92), this work radiates a similar early winter nocturnal atmosphere in which two women in black capes roam like ghosts.

During this time, more and more foreigners came to Bruges. In 1887 such artists as Georges Seurat and Camille Pissarro were there, and in 1894 Paul Gauguin and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec visited. However, many of these noted artists did not visit Bruges to work; for instance, only one small print of Bruges by Pissarro is known, the *Fiddler's Quay in Bruges* of 1894, made with etching and aquatint, revised in a later oil painting.[32]

Quite original are two designs for woodcuts by the very versatile French art nouveau artist Georges de Feure (1868–1943) illustrating Georges Rodenbach's "Petits nocturnes de Bruges," which were published in the magazine *L'Image* in May 1897 in Paris. In the title print a ferryman rows two somber women, perhaps grieving, over the water while on the other side dark shadows approach a lighted portal (fig. 12). A preparatory drawing for this illustration still exists (fig. 13). A separate woodcut with ornate arabesques (fig. 11) illustrates Rodenbach's poem about peasant women who advance silently through snowy Bruges in their sinister black capes.[33] The dark water ripples in concentric circles, a metaphor of the silent and deathly loneliness that

13. Georges de Feure, preparatory transfer drawing for a print for "Petits nocturnes de Bruges" by Georges Rodenbach in *L'Image*, 1897. Pencil on paper, heightened with white, 60 x 47 cm, private collection.

14. Georges de Feure, *Sensuality*, from the print series *Bruges mystique et sensuelle*, Paris, 1899. Lithograph in two colors on paper, 60.5 x 43.6 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, p2708-005S2013.

Rodenbach described thus: "We are in the midst of this silence, like a stone dropped in the middle of a dead water. The circles become larger, then disappear....One feels one's self alone..."[34]

Two years later a series of color lithographs by the same artist appeared with the revealing title *Bruges mystique et sensuelle*. The set included no fewer than eleven prints with representations of worldly, fashionable women in sharp contrast with their elders in black capes, placed in a cityscape of Bruges or in a landscape of the region. In *Sensuality*, for instance, we see silhouettes of couples through an illuminated window in the darkness. The exterior façade along the water is ornamented with a figurine of the Madonna. Below sits a woman with a black hooded cape in a barge who could perhaps represent death, as a memento mori (fig. 14).

Henri Le Sidaner (1862–1939) came to Bruges in 1898 after having read *Bruges-la-morte*, and in 1899–1900 he lived there for a year. Here he fully developed his personal style in a series of thirty-five typical Bruges cityscapes, finished paintings, oil sketches, and drawings.[35] Evening and nighttime effects on deserted canals became a favorite motif. Le Sidaner painted symbolically charged images of hazy cityscapes in the dreamy silence of the evening twilight. They are synthesized, poetic memories of a particular site rather than a detailed and topographically exact cityscape such as we will see later with Khnopff. Like Xavier Mellery, he sought to portray the inner life of things. A contemplative, meditative silence, often inspired by literature or music, was the real subject. This he achieved through the use of a limited palette, subdued coloring, and flaky strokes and hatchings that muffle the whole surface of the canvas and veil the subject.

The ordinary thus became mysterious and poetic, as in his *Moonlight, Bruges* of 1900, where the canal *De Dijver* is shown, along with the Orangerie at left under the snow (fig. 15). It is a twilight that is characterized by the dreamlike atmosphere of the falling dusk. The dark water stands in contrast to the intimate atmosphere within the houses, which is suggested by the mysterious but warmly lit windows. This is a motif we will later see with René Magritte in his *Empire of Light* (1954, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 6715).

A serene reflection in sleeping waters is also found in *The Quay* (Groeningemuseum, Bruges, 1979.GRO0008.I) and the *Canal at the Jan van Eyck Square in Bruges* that Henri Le Sidaner painted in 1898 and 1900 respectively.[36] The anxiety of Degouve de Nuncques made way for subtle mystery and hazy serenity in Le Sidaner's work.

15. Henri Le Sidaner, *Moonlight, Bruges*, 1900. Oil on canvas, 77.2 x 52.8 cm, Vancouver Art Gallery, VAG 84.106.

Nordic writers and artists were also attracted to Bruges. After the Danish writer and painter Holger Drachmann visited in 1882, his countryman Georg Brandes traveled to Belgium in 1891 and called Bruges "the Belgian Pompeii or the Nüremberg of the Netherlands."[37] They were followed by the influential Germans Count Harry Kessler and Richard Muther.[38] In 1895 the Norwegian Edvard Munch visited Knokke near Bruges on the Belgian coast. Bruges also attracted a group of little-known Scandinavian, especially Swedish, artists. They were interested in Belgian symbolism, which, more than the French movement, had sought inspiration in the North. Belgium was then, as now, a crossroads of European culture. German philosophy, the operas of Richard Wagner, the British Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Crafts movement, and even some Scandinavian legends were among the varied sources of inspiration for the Belgian symbolists. The Flemish component, even though it was often expressed in the French language, gave an original and quirky character to Belgian culture that did not go unnoticed in the North. For these artists, the rediscovery of Gothic art, the Flemish primitives, and even the local folk art was associated with pure, authentic, and honest art, and a springboard for modernity in general. This pure ideal illustrated a fundamental difference from the French-oriented symbolism that was often associated with decadence.[39]

16. Olof Sager-Nelson, *From Bruges*, 1895. Oil on canvas, 45 x 60 cm, Göteborgs Konstmuseum, F 104.

17. Pelle Swedlund, *Church in Bruges*, 1898. Oil on canvas, 81 x 60 cm, Göteborgs Konstmuseum, GKM 0391.

18. Pelle Swedlund, *The Deserted House, Bruges*, 1898. Oil on canvas, 59 x 83 cm, Göteborgs Konstmuseum, GKM 0304.

The first artist of this aforementioned group, Olof Sager-Nelson (1868–96), visited Bruges in 1894 and 1895, partly in reaction to what he considered the too strong influence of French painting on Swedish art. Attracted by the Flemish primitives, the main motive of his stay was religious mysticism, combined with a search for seclusion and silence.[40] The young artist was then suffering from tuberculosis and was terminally ill. Even though he was unable to read Rodenbach's novel, since he spoke no French, he nonetheless experienced the kind of solitude depicted in the novel. Unlike the nocturnes and gray paintings of most of his European predecessors, Sager-Nelson's painting *From Bruges* of 1895 shows the city during broad daylight.[41] Even so, the scene is indeed very silent and lonely and the canvas depicts a sun-lit mystery which could be defined as "white symbolism" (fig. 16).

The Göteborgs Konstmuseum contains a remarkable collection of Bruges cityscapes that characterize Swedish symbolism. *Church in Bruges* (fig. 17) by Pelle Swedlund (1865–1947) is bathed in the warm light of the approaching dusk, stylistically similar to the work of Le Sidaner. A second painting by the same artist, *The Deserted House, Bruges* (fig. 18) recalls instead the works of Degouve de Nuncques and shows the same Orangerie building. Other Swedes such as Wilhelm Smith (1867–1949) and Paul Graf (1866–1903) painted similar Bruges motifs such as *In Bruges* of 1899 (fig. 19) and *Moonlight Night, Bruges* of 1901 (fig. 20).

## AFTER THE TURN OF THE CENTURY: 1902–05

After a hiatus of ten years, Bruges themes suddenly re-emerged explicitly in the work of Fernand Khnopff. Between 1902 and 1905 he created a dozen subtle dream-like cityscapes of exceptional quality, evocative of isolation and nostalgia.

In one of his most important works, *Secret-Reflection* (fig. 21) of 1902, Khnopff's symbolic complexity was fully developed. In this rebus-like construct, which is a key work of Belgian symbol-

19. Wilhelm Smith, *In Bruges*, 1899. Oil on canvas, 90.5 x 110.5 cm, Göteborgs Konstmuseum, GKM 0309.

20. Paul Graf, *Moonlight Night, Bruges*, 1901. Oil on canvas, 66 x 81 cm, Göteborgs Konstmuseum, GKM 0359.

21. Fernand Khnopff, *Secret-Reflection*, 1902. Pastel and colored pencil on paper, 49.5 cm diam., and 27.8 x 49 cm, Groeningemuseum, Bruges, 0000.GRO1232.II-1233.II.

ism, the city of Bruges plays an important role. Two separate drawings, one in tondo form and the other rectangular, were mounted together by the artist in a kind of vertical diptych.[42] This duality is also found in Rodenbach's novel *Bruges-la-morte* published ten years earlier. The parallel identities of the dead woman embodied in the medieval city with Bruges a mirror image of her psyche, found an echo in the parallel symbolism of Khnopff's *Secret-Reflection*, where the same kind of doubles are explicitly shown: woman-mask, flesh-ivory, life-death, and water-stone. The upper panel of *Secret* shows an image of the isolated, claustrated yet secure inner world, and then *Reflection* shows us a fragment of the dead, chilly crepuscular exterior world. As the title suggests, *Reflection* is an illustration of mirror symbolism, a major theme for many European symbolists.

Where *My Heart Weeps for Days of Yore* (plates 106–7) and the frontispiece of *Bruges-la-morte* represented the beguinage bridge, in *Reflection* the attention is now focused on the Gothic gables of the St. John's Hospital in Bruges. The dead St. John's Hospital lies like the drowned Ophelia, silently sinking in the sleeping water. This drawing was made in 1902, the year that a groundbreaking exhibition of Flemish primitives was held in Bruges. It is likely Khnopff visited this exhibition; could it be a coincidence that precisely in 1902 Bruges once again becomes a main theme of his work? However, he never admitted that he saw this exhibition.[43]

The image of drowning is also is suggested by Khnopff's other masterpiece, *An Abandoned City* from 1904 (fig. 22), a drawing that shows Memling Square. Bruges appears to be an abandoned ghost town, overtaken by a mysterious flood. Gaston Bachelard described this with the neologism "ophélisation." Or is it perhaps just the opposite, the waters ebbing instead of flooding in?[44] Is this image to be interpreted as a flight from reality, a representation of the fleetingness of life, the erosion and the decline by the ravages of time and the inevitability of one's final disappearance in the infinite void of death? Khnopff's rich symbolism is open to many interpretations, all the more so because the artist had lived as a small boy along the canal in Bruges. His parents' house, which still exists, had a basement with windows just above the water level of the canal. The powerful moodiness of the Bruges mansion, with the mysterious and gloomy water flowing beside it, must have left an indelible impression on the child, and that is certainly recognizable in his work.[45]

Many of Khnopff's works memorializing Bruges are directly inspired by the black and white photographs illustrating Georges Rodenbach's 1892 novel *Bruges-la-morte*, reproduced in process engraving (fig. 23). This was one of the first novels ever illustrated with photographs. The artist framed his compositions differently from the photos in order to create a mysterious and unusual effect. He chose to cut off the tops of the buildings, removing sky and roofs so as to lend increased importance to the water and the reflections of the façades in the canal that runs alongside them.

22. Fernand Khnopff, *An Abandoned City*, 1904. Pastel and graphite on paper, mounted on canvas, 76 x 69 cm, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 7030.

More than mere topographic views, Khnopff sought with these works to express the serene inwardness of Bruges, the nostalgia for the past that can be partly explained as an obsession with oblivion that engulfs the memory. What is striking are the subtle grays with which the works are drawn or painted. These melancholy cityscapes, with their limited color range, become "almost" exactly like redrawn commercial black and white photographs and postcards. *Entrance to the Beguinage* (plate 109) is an excellent example.

Another tightly framed architectural composition, Khnopff's *Memory of Flanders. A Canal* of 1904 (plate 110) with its views of the façades of the back of the town hall and the former law courts (currently the city archives) on the canal *Groene Rei* depicts almost the same view as the left panel of *Days of Yore* (fig. 4) with its typical gray monochrome.[46]

Another example of Khnopff's tendency to cut off the upper portion of the scene is *In Bruges. A Portal* (plate 111) from around 1904, which shows the Paradise Portal

23. Photograph of the beguinage bridge illustrating *Bruges-la-morte*, 1892.

24. René Magritte (1898–1967), *The Art of Conversation*, 1950. Oil on canvas, 50 x 60 cm, private collection.

25. White nineteenth-century house, now destroyed, on the Minnewater, c. 1945–50. Bruges Heritage, Archives FO_A30959.

of the Church of Our Lady with the backdrop of the historic Palace of the Lords of Gruuthuse (the Gruuthuse Museum). The squares of the two historic monuments are separated by blank walls that emphasize the oppressive confines, or perhaps the fault line between the spiritual religiosity of the church portal and the worldly court of the city castle?

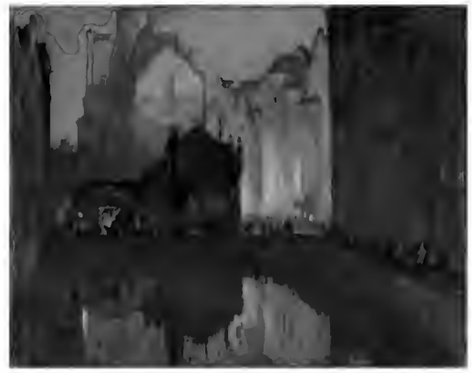
The large drawing *In Bruges. The Minnewater* (1904–05) shows a view of the Minnewater (*Lac d'Amour*, or Lake of Love) with the Powder Tower, the famous bridge, and the tower of the Church of Our Lady in the background (plate 112). Once again the predominance of water in this work is key. Khnopff's views of Bruges are petrified dreams and often the reflection is more real than the original.[47]

This motif was echoed in a surreal wordplay created by Rene Magritte in *The Art of Conversation*, a painting from 1950 (fig. 24). The image of the word *Amour*, which refers to the Lake of Love, rhymes with the arches of the Minnewater bridge. We recognize similar trees as well as a neoclassical façade. The white house, which is now demolished, can be seen in old photographs of the Minnewater (fig. 25). Magritte admired his compatriot Khnopff who can be considered a forerunner of surrealism.

## OTHER ARTISTS: THE AFTERMATH

The last major literary figures to be briefly discussed here are the Austrian Stefan Zweig and the Czech Rainer Maria Rilke who both wrote in German, and each of whom visited Bruges. Zweig published his poem "Brügge" in 1904. Rilke traveled to a number of Flemish cities on the recommendation of Auguste Rodin and Emile Verhaeren, and the fruits of his visit to Bruges including the two poems "Béguinage Sainte Elisabeth, Brügge" and "Quai du Rosaire" were published in 1907.[48]

The final visual artists were more disparate. The Belgian Frantz Charlet (1862–1928), a founding member of the groundbreaking avant-garde group *Les XX*, was in his turn sensitive to the silent atmosphere that was almost tangible in the "echoes" of the streets of Bruges. *The Golden Houses of Bruges* (Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent), exhibited for the first time in 1902, focuses on several women who huddle under their typical black hooded capes in an attempt to protect themselves against the bitter cold and snow. They hurry across the square in front of the town hall while a child throws a snowball. The scene is located in the historic Burg Square, in front of the town hall and the former registry of the Liberty of



26. Frank Brangwyn, *Jan van Eyck Square in Bruges*, 1906. Watercolor and charcoal on paper and cardboard, 76.8 x 87.6 cm, Arentshuismuseum, Bruges, 0.1058.II.

27. Charles Warren Eaton, *Augustijnenbridge, Bruges*, n.d. Oil on canvas, 61 x 50.8 cm, private collection.

28. Diego Rivera, *The House on the Bridge*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 147 x 121 cm, Museo Nacional de Arte, Ciudad de México.

29. Jan Toorop, *Adoration in Bruges, or The Divine Worship*, 1914. Drawing on paper, 97 x 95 cm, location unknown.

Bruges and is lit by a winter evening sun. A completely different atmosphere is found in the watercolors of Frank Brangwyn (1867–1956), a British artist who was born in Bruges and spent his childhood there, just as Fernand Khnopff did. His contribution to the art nouveau in the circle of Siegfried Bing was especially interesting, and his Bruges cityscapes must be mentioned in this context.[49] A first watercolor, *Bruges at Dawn* (1903) leads us along the canal of the *Lange Rei* in the blue glow of the dawn, where a barge with potatoes, or possibly coal, is waiting to be unloaded. The city is still asleep, no window is illuminated and there is not a living soul in sight. A lone street light is the last witness of the haunting shadows of the night. The atmosphere in the second watercolor is much grimmer. *Jan van Eyck Square in Bruges* (1906, fig. 26) shows a mysterious and unusually frightening aspect of the canal *Spiegelrei*, with historical monuments such as the Burghers' Lodge (*Poortersloge*) and the Toll House with its corner portico at the rear. The market stall and caravan of a street fair on the square are surrounded by ominous human silhouettes that scurry through the night street like rats. The strange light and the flickering reflection in the water give this watercolor an oppressive atmosphere that goes beyond symbolism.

30. Erich Heckel, *The Augustijnenrei at Bruges in the Morning*, 1917. Oil and tempera on canvas, 96.5 x 83.4 cm, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent, 1991-J.

Gustave De Smet's *Bruges-la-morte, Bruges-la-vivante* (Groeningemuseum, Bruges, 1988.GRO0012.I) shows the city in a completely different and more optimistic light. The remnants of the medieval city walls and the Cross Gate (*Kruispoort*) in the middle are juxtaposed with the Ghent-Bruges-Ostend canal on the left with the chimneys of a modern industrial malting plant contrasting past and present, Bruges the dead and Bruges the living.[50]

And what of Americans artists? Very few are known to have visited Bruges in the period explored here. In addition to the above mentioned Whistler, Charles Warren Eaton (1857–1937), an American tonalist, painted many views of Bruges and the countryside around it. He visited the city in 1885 but most of his cityscapes date from 1901 to 1910. His production is stylistically very diverse. Some views are blurry in a symbolist manner, either at night or by day (fig. 27), while others are painted with a particularly bright palette. Finally, we know that another American, William Merritt Chase (1849–1916) organized a summer school in Bruges for several years and must have portrayed it. However, as yet we have found no trace of his cityscapes of Bruges.[51]

Even rarer, and often overlooked, is the large painting by the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera, *The House on the Bridge* from 1909 (fig. 28). It depicts with very warm colors the back of the Arents House, a former aristocratic residence that forms a

bridge over the canal, as well as the side wall of the Palace of the Lords of Gruuthuse (both buildings are now museums). Rivera (1886–1957) painted this odd cityscape during his visit to the city, where he also met the Russian artist Angelina Beloff, who became his first wife.

We end with two completely different, almost opposite, works that were created at the time of the First World War. The Dutch symbolist Jan Toorop (1858–1928) emphasized the image of Bruges at its most mystical in his drawing *Adoration in Bruges, or The Divine Worship* in 1914 (fig. 29). We can see in the background a cross-bearing procession that passes over a bridge—perhaps the procession of the Holy Blood—with the holy family at left and some large praying figures projected onto the historic buildings at right.

The last painting to be mentioned is a purely expressionistic cityscape from 1917 by Erich Heckel (1883–1970, fig. 30). During World War I this member of the German expressionist group *die Brücke* served as a Red Cross volunteer in Flanders. The faceted sky and sharply angled buildings, the dynamic energy of the representation, as well as the more intense colors, show the impact of cubism and futurism (but this would be the beginning of a completely different story).

## CONCLUSION

Depending on the individual temperament of the visual artists, a wide variety of views and sensitivities were manifest, and all within the limits of one single theme: the city of Bruges. It is a very rich and many-layered corpus that transcends the anecdotal and picturesque. The impact of international literature on symbolist imagery cannot be overstated. However, among the many French, German, and English writers, the Belgian Rodenbach had the most influence.

The field of research is still far from fully explored. The most common cityscapes are above all those with water features and reflections. In terms of style, a huge distance was traveled in a time span of forty years between 1887 and 1917; that is, between Whistler and Heckel. The examples of Heckel and Magritte confirm that symbolism is indeed the root of expressionism and surrealism.

In this very individualistic era, artists responded to Bruges with works that mirrored their own preoccupations and personalities. Whistler, Lévy-Dhurmer, Baertsoen, and Charlet presented a serene vision of the city; Mellery and Le Sidaner attempted to dig deeper and express "the soul of things." The grimmer atmosphere in the works of Degouve de Nuncques and Brangwyn was imbued with a vague but overpowering anxiety. De Smet, on the other hand, was more optimistic and balanced the past against the present. The only people in these paintings and drawings were usually women with black capes. With de Feure they stand in stark contrast with the frivolous modern women who were symbols of decadence. Among these Belgian and French artists, we unexpectedly find a group of Swedish artists, mainly Sager-Nelson and Swedlund, a rare American Eaton, a mystical religious work by Toorop, and a surprising Rivera.

The most complex works were those of Fernand Khnopff, who used Bruges to embody its silent interiority, bathing in nostalgia from his own past. Like his kindred spirit Rodenbach, Khnopff displayed a pessimistic view of life, full of unresolved questioning and mystery. This is brilliantly reflected in this exhibition with a series of indisputable masterpieces, which are among the highest quality and most sophisticated that the master produced.

The Belgian art historian Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert aptly expressed it in his book *Psychologie d'une ville: Essai sur Bruges* (1901): "The artists are right. The city is a living being."[52] For many artists, and especially Fernand Khnopff, the paintings of Bruges can be considered self-portraits.

Translated from the Dutch by Jeffery Howe

1 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "On Leaving Bruges" (1849), in *Ballads and Sonnets* (Portland: Thomas B. Mosher, 1903), 287.

2 Dominique Marechal, "Bruges Painting and Europe, from Mannerism to Symbolism," in *Bruges and Europe*, ed. Valentin Vermeersch (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1992), esp. 374–83, ill.; Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, "Bruges, ville

morte ou cité éternelle," in *Paris–Bruxelles/Bruxelles–Paris: Réalisme, impressionnisme, symbolisme, art nouveau; Les relations artistiques entre la France et la Belgique, 1848–1914*, ed. Anne Pingeot and Robert Hoozee (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 1997), 330–38; Sharon L. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. chapter 7; Michel Draguet, *Le Symbolisme en Belgique* (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2010), 189–93.

3 William Wordsworth published several poems on Bruges in his *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820*, including "Bruges" and "Incident at Bruges"; see *The Complete Poetical Works* (London: Macmillan, 1888).

4 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, ed. Elisabeth Luther Cary, vol. 1 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903), 99, 87–88.

5 George P. Landow, "Introduction: Typological Symbolism in Hunt's Major Works," *Replete with Meaning: William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism*, http://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/painting/whh/replete/ch2intro.html.

6 Rossetti, *Poems*, 86.

7 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Belfry of Bruges and Other Poems* (Cambridge: John Owen, 1845).

8 Howard Mansfield, "Whistler in Belgium and Holland," *Print-Collector's Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Dec. 1916): 374–95; reprinted with *Whistler as a Critic of His Own Prints* (New York: Knoedler, n.d.), 10–11. A second example of this same etching is conserved at the Art Institute of Chicago. Dominique Marechal, "'Verging nicht diese Stadt?' Brügge als Treffpunkt europäischer Symbolisten," in *Der Kuss der Sphinx: Symbolismus in Belgien*, ed. Michel Draguet and Evelyn Benesch, exh. cat. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007), 32, ill.

9 Victor Hugo, *En voyage: France et Belgique* (Paris: Librairie du Victor Hugo illustré, n.d.), 54–55.

10 Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Fonds des dessins, Album Gustave Courbet, 1, fol. 26, v.; Courbet visited the city several times; see Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu, ed., *Correspondance de Courbet* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), 69; Dominique Marechal, "Belgium and the Netherlands through the Eyes of Courbet," in *Courbet: Mapping Realism; Paintings from the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and American Collections*, ed. Jeffery Howe, exh. cat. (Chestnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2013), 29–37. Courbet drew no Flemish primitives after this.

11 Claudie Judrin, "Les copies, caricatures, monuments et orfèvrerie," in *Rodin et la Belgique*, ed. Frank Vanhaecke and Luc Derycke, exh. cat. (Charleroi: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1997), 73–74, ill.: *Esquisse de personnages d'après la chapelle du Saint Sang de Bruges*, pencil on paper, 7.5 x 8.3 cm, Musée Rodin, Paris, D 00055.

12 "Ville fantôme, ville momie, à peu près conservée. Cela sent la mort, le Moyen Age, Venise, les spectres [routiniers], les tombeaux." *Villes Mortes: Contextes pour "Bruges-la-Morte" de G. Rodenbach*, http://ae-lib.org.ua/texts/rodenbach__villes_mortes_contextes_fr.htm#1-1-baudelaire.

13 "J'ai la nostalgie de Bruges et de ses cloches aux sons voilés." Quoted in Fernand Bonneure, *Brugge Beschreven: Hoe een stad in teksten verschijnt* (Brussels: Elsevier, 1984), 143. Following another visit to Bruges in 1893 Verlaine added: "Quel beau petit Amsterdam catholique, ce Bruges..." Bonneure cites many other authors who have sung of Bruges, most in their original language. See also Bernard Bousmanne, *Verlaine en Belgique: Cellule 252; Turbulences poétiques*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Mardaga, 2015), 219–20, 223, and notes 541 and 545.

14 "A des heures et sans que tel souffle l'émeuve / Toute la vétusté presque couleur encens / Comme furtive d'elle et visible je sens / Que se dévêt pli selon pli la pierre veuve // Flotte ou semble par soi n'apporter une preuve / Sinon d'épandre pour baume utile le temps / (Nous immémoriaux quelques-uns si contents) / Sur la soudaineté de notre amitié neuve // O très chers rencontrés en le jamais banal / Bruges multipliant l'aube au défunt canal / Avec la promenade éparse de maint cygne // Quand solennellement cette cité m'apprit / Lesquels entre ses fils un autre vol désigne / A prompte irradier ainsi qu'aile l'esprit." *Excelsior! 1883–1893* (Bruges: Presses Popp, 1893), 367–68.

15 *Excelsior! 1883–1893*, 223–24.

16 Quoted in Andries van den Abeele, *André Gide, Bruges et les Presses Sainte Catherine*, http://users.skynet.be/sb176943/AndriesVandenAbeele/AVDA356.htm.

17 For Fernand Khnopff, see Jeffery Howe, *The Symbolist Art of Fernand Khnopff* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982); Robert L. Delevoy, Catherine De Croës, and Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, *Fernand Khnopff: Catalogue de l'œuvre* (Brussels: Cosmos Monographies, 1979; 2nd rev. ed. Brussels: Lebeer Hossmann, 1987); Michel Draguet,

*Khnopff, ou L'ambigu poétique* (Brussels: Crédit Communal; Paris: Flammarion, 1995); Frederik Leen, "Fernand Khnopff and Symbolism," in *Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921)*, ed. Frederik Leen, Dominique Marechal, Sophie van Vliet et al., exh. cat. (Brussels: Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, 2004), 13–24.

18 Khnopff was not born in Bruges, as was occasionally reported, but in his maternal grandparents' castle in Grembergen.

19 Jeffery Howe, "Fernand Khnopff's Depictions of Bruges: Medievalism, Mysticism and Socialism," *Arts Magazine* 55, no. 4 (Dec. 1980): 126–31; Lynne Pudles, "Fernand Khnopff, Georges Rodenbach, and Bruges, the Dead City," *Art Bulletin* 74, no. 4 (Dec. 1992): 637–53; Dominique Marechal, "Eternity Reflected Motionless in the Water: Fernand Khnopff; From Bruges to Fosset," in Leen et al., *Fernand Khnopff*, 35–43. For completeness, it should be noted that Khnopff created one more view of Bruges in 1912, but it is much less important: see Delevoy, De Croës, and Ollinger-Zinque, *Fernand Khnopff*, 472, no. 500: *Les moulins de Bruges*, 1912, pastel on paper, 50 x 57 cm.

20 Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, "*With Grégoire Le Roy. My Heart Weeps for Days of Yore* (1889)," in Leen et al., *Fernand Khnopff*, 220–24.

21 Wolfgang Drost, "Entsprechungen in belgischer Kunst und Literatur des Fin de siècle—Von Fernand Khnopff zu Georges Rodenbach," in *Bilderwelten als Vergegenwärtigung und Verrätselung der Welt: Literatur und Kunst um die Jahrhundertwende*, ed. Volker Kapp, Helmuth Kiesel, and Klaus Lubbers (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1997), 109–38; Joël Goffin and Hervé Joubeaux, eds., *Georges Rodenbach, ou La légende de Bruges*, exh. cat. (Vulaines-sur-Seine: Musée départemental Stéphane Mallarmé, 2005); Barbara Wright, "*Bruges-la-morte* et le piège de la ressemblance," in *La Belgique entre deux siècles: Laboratoire de la modernité, 1880–1914*, ed. Nathalie Aubert, Pierre-Philippe Fraiture, and Patrick McGuinness (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 149–58. See also the chapter by James Elkins on *Bruges-la-morte*, "3/1 Georges Rodenbach, *Bruges-la-morte*," *Writing with Images*, Jan. 29, 2014, http://writingwithimages.com/?page_id=210.

22 Ollinger-Zinque, "*Avec Georges Rodenbach*," 225.

23 For further analysis, see Pudles, "Fernand Khnopff," 643.

24 A recent English translation of *Bruges-la-morte* by Will Stone and Mike Mitchell appeared in 2005, published by Daedalus Books with an introduction by Alan Hollinghurst. An earlier translation appeared in 1903, translated by Thomas Duncan (London: Swan Sonnenschein).

25 Georges Rodenbach, *Bruges-la-morte* (Paris: Flammarion, 1892), i–ii. See Véronique Henninger, "Le dispositif photo-littéraire: Texte et photographies dans *Bruges-la-Morte*," *Romantisme* 169, no. 3 (2015): 111–25.

26 Dominique Marechal, ed., *Chefs d'œuvre de l'orfèvrerie brugeoise*, exh. cat. (Bruges: Stichting Kunstboek, 1993), no. 16.

27 Delevoy, De Croës, and Ollinger-Zinque, *Fernand Khnopff*, no. 413.

28 Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, *Les peintres de l'âme: Le symbolisme idéaliste en France*, exh. cat. (Ixelles: Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Ixelles, 1999), 90–91. See also the pastel drawing *Bruges* from 1892, 70 x 50 cm, private collection (Pierre Bergé, Geneva, *Vente aux enchère publiques*, auc. cat., May 13, 2004, lot 30, ill.).

29 Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque et al., eds., *Les XX et la Libre esthétique: Honderjaar later/Cent ans après*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, 1993), 286, ill.; Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society*, 263.

30 Emile Verhaeren, *Villes Mortes: Bruges; Hommage à Bruges* (Brussels: Lamertin, 1894), with illustrations by Alexandre Hannotiau, and Inga Rossi-Schrimpf, "L'âme des choses!: Aspects of Belgian-Nordic Affinities in the Fin-de-Siècle," in *Anywhere out of the World: Olof Sager-Nelson and His Contemporaries*, ed. Johan Sjöström, exh. cat. (Gothenburg: Göteborgs Konstmuseum, 2015), 161.

31 Christie's, London, auc. cat., Dec. 1, 1989, lot 52. See also Denis Laoureux, ed., *William Degouve de Nuncques: Maître du mystère* (Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2012).

32 Loÿs Delteil, *Camille Pissarro: L'œuvre gravé et lithographié; Catalogue raisonné* (Paris: Loÿs Delteil, 1923), no. 108: *Quai des Ménétriers à Bruges*, 1894, etching with aquatint on paper, 16.5 x 20.5 cm. This motif was redone in 1903 in an oil painting (Manchester Art Gallery, 1946.69).

33 Georges Rodenbach, "Petits nocturnes de Bruges," *L'Image* 6 (May 1897): 161–63, with two woodcuts designed by Georges de Feure, the first published by A. Dauvergne, the second by Van de Putt and Leyat. In addition there are two more "culs-de-lampe" with Bruges motifs. Gabriel Weisberg, "Georges de Feure's Mysterious Women: A

Study of Symbolist Sources in the Writings of Charles Baudelaire and Georges Rodenbach," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 82 (Oct. 1974): 223–30. Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society*, 322–23.

34 "On est soi-même comme au centre de ce silence, comme une pierre tombée au milieu d'une eau morte. Les cercles s'agrandissent, s'effacent....On se sent seul..." Rodenbach, "Petits nocturnes de Bruges," 162. See also Michael Fuhr, ed., "Die Tote Stadt," in *Edvard Munch und das unheimliche*, exh. cat. (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2009), 248, ill.

35 Yann Farinaux-Le Sidaner, *Le Sidaner: L'œuvre peint et gravé* (Paris: Éditions A. Sauret, 1989); Jumeau-Lafond, *Peintres de l'âme*.

36 Henri Le Sidaner, *Canal at the Jan van Eyck Square in Bruges*, 1900, oil on canvas, 50.3 x 81.7 cm. Formerly Matsukata Collection; Sotheby's, New York, May 4, 2006, auc. cat., lot 164.

37 Georg Brandes, "Belgien" (1892), in *Dissolving Views: Characterzeichnungen von Land und Leuten, aus Natur und Kunst* (Leipzig: H. Barsdorf, 1899), 102; quoted in Rossi-Schrimpf, "L'âme des choses," 163.

38 Günter Riederer and Jörg Schuster, eds., *Harry Graf Kessler: Das Tagebuch Zweiter Band, 1892–1897* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 2010), 452–53.

39 Rossi-Schrimpf, "L'âme des choses," 157–73. See also Michelle Facos, *Swedish and National Romanticism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Hirsh, *Symbolism and Modern Urban Society*, 322. The political struggle for Flemish emancipation left them indifferent, however.

40 A first painting from 1894 represents a popular and anecdotal scene with a few local people, women in their traditional capes; see Jeff Werner, "'I Won't Be Here Long...': On Olof Sager-Nelson's Life and Art," in Sjöström, *Anywhere out of the World*, 41, ill.; a second *Street in Bruges* (Göteborgs Konstmuseum, F 102) is illustrated in Magnus Haglund, "Paintings as Music: On Olof Sager-Nelson and the 1890s Art Scenes," in Sjöström, *Anywhere out of the World*, 115–16, ill.

41 Here we mention two outliers: the very colorful *Beguinage Bridge* by Maxime Maufra from 1894 (Sotheby's, New York, May 12, 1994, auc. cat., lot 140, ill.) and the Hungarian Nabi, Jozsef Rippl-Ronai who during a visit in 1901 painted a *Rue de Bruges (Quai des miroirs)* that is unfortunately now lost.

42 Dominique Marechal, "*Secret-Reflection* (1902)," in Leen et al., *Fernand Khnopff*, 226–27, with bibliography, also Howe, *The Symbolist Art of Fernand Khnopff*, 99–102.

43 Fernand Khnopff was interested in the Flemish primitives, as evidenced by the subjects of his lectures and articles. See Jeffery Howe, ed. and trans., *Fernand Khnopff: Writings on Art and Artists* (Chestnut Hill: Boston College, 2016), https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:107202.

44 Pudles, "Fernand Khnopff"; Dominique Marechal, "*An Abandoned City* (1904)," in Leen et al., *Fernand Khnopff*, 230–31.

45 Marechal, "From Bruges to Fosset," 35, ill.

46 Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, "*Memory of Flanders. A Canal* (1904)," in Leen et al., *Fernand Khnopff*, 114.

47 Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque, "*In Bruges. The Minnewater* (1904–1905)," in Leen et al., *Fernand Khnopff*, 117.

48 Stefan Zweig, "Brügge," *Neu Freie Presse*, Aug. 24, 1904; Rainer Maria Rilke, *Neue Gedichte: Erster Teil* (Leipzig: Insel, 1907), 79–81, 78.

49 Dominique Marechal, *Collectie Frank Brangwyn: Catalogus* (Bruges: Stedelijke Musea, 1987), 85, 88, 193, 254. Some watercolors by Frank Brangwyn, including those of Bruges cityscapes, were reproduced in Japanese-style color woodcuts by Yoshijiro Urushibara.

50 Piet Boyens, *Gustave De Smet: Chronique et analyse de l'œuvre* (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1989), 305.

51 In Bruges, Chase painted several portraits of the American Bensel family.

52 "Les artistes ont raison. La ville est un être vivant." Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert, *Psychologie d'une ville: Essai sur Bruges* (Paris: Alcan, 1901), iv.

# *SERRES CHAUDES*: INSIDE-OUTSIDE, OUTSIDE-INSIDE

Albert Alhadeff

Presently on view at the McMullen Museum of Art is a fascinating pen and ink drawing (plate 114), a gouache on loan from the Hearn Family Trust, a preeminent collection of late nineteenth-century Belgian art.[1] Though known to specialists, the gouache at the McMullen has long eluded the public's gaze. Never in the limelight, even when it was first published (and that was almost a hundred years ago!), it was mislabeled.[2] Neglect has long since trailed it. Indeed, where it might have been reproduced and discussed in more recent publications, it was not.[3] And when a major retrospective with an accompanying catalogue was put together but a few years ago, the Hearn Family Trust study, which reasonably might have been included in its pages, was again passed over.[4] Its maker as well, George Minne (1866–1941), a reticent and reclusive late nineteenth-century artist from Ghent, has, like the Hearn Family gouache, been overshadowed by events.[5] But neither Minne nor his pen study deserve this fate. Indeed Minne's study was never meant to be cast aside, lost in the shuffle. On the contrary, its origins lie in a major *succès de scandale* of the late nineteenth century, a moving anthology of esoteric verses, *Serres chaudes* (*Hothouses*) by Maurice Maeterlinck (fig. 1) of 1889.[6]

1. Maurice Maeterlinck, *Serres chaudes* (Paris: Léon Vanier, 1889).

2. Maurice Maeterlinck, c. 1890.

3. George Minne, c. 1886/7 with dedicatory note to Grégoire Le Roy.

Maeterlinck (1862–49) (fig. 2) and Minne (fig. 3), friends since their teens and both from Ghent, shared each other's thirst for work when their careers were just beginning to take off in the late 1880s.[7] The two were reserved in nature, though favoring sports,[8] and they encouraged each other's enthusiasms and initial efforts whether in the arts or literature.

With other like-minded friends, Grégoire Le Roy and Charles van Lerberghe, they lived a cloistered life in what was then a somnolent city,[9] a moody scape resonant with its late Gothic churches, its gray skies and gray cobblestones. Isolated in Ghent from the throes of the capital and from Leopold II's militant colonial policies,

4. George Minne, figures asleep under stars, from *Serres chaudes*, 1889.

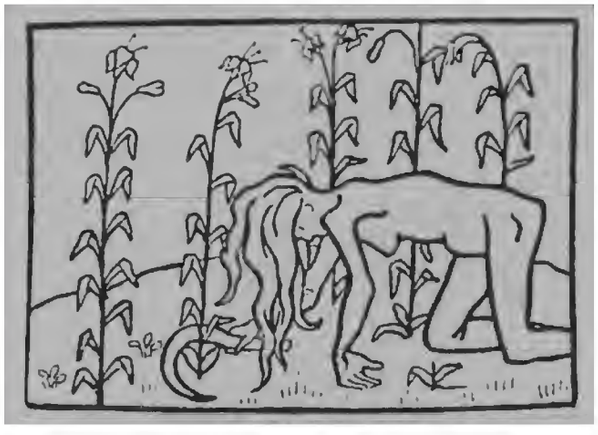
Maeterlinck and Minne, in their solitude, apparently shared a set of like concerns, tropes that brought them inexorably together. This was obvious to their contemporaries, for to quote an appraisal of their temperament from 1891: "M. George Minne is a poet, he knows anguish, pain....He is talented and his gifts are symmetrical [*sont symmetriques*] with Maeterlinck's; like him, Minne comprehends the unsaid, a barely sketched sentiment, the vague; and as with him, deep recollections of an ancestral past lie within him..."[10]

That *les souvenirs ancestraux* lie deep within them seemed almost inevitable. And as Minne and Maeterlinck's peers observed, such deep-seated recollections were nurtured by Ghent's sullen ambiance, an ambiance of grief, of withdrawal. Its crippling silence is expressed in Georges Rodenbach's verses, a slightly older peer who like them was from Ghent.

> Few passers-by and nothing but the vague rumor
> Of a far-away chariot, over there, in a street
> Nothing but a sad waning wail
> Like the slow breadth of a city dying.[11]

*Une ville qui meurt*, a dying city—and yet this most mournful city did not hamper their labors. On the contrary, this was a time in their lives when they were most prolific. Maeterlinck was then publishing long, detailed, and innovative translations and commentary on the life and texts on beguines and on late medieval Flemish mystics, complementing these groundbreaking studies with grim, dark Shakespearean dramas and deeply moving *aperçus* on life's transience—not to mention verses centering on the *serre* and (*la*) *ville qui meurt*. And Minne, in the throes of his initial labors—some truly innovative three-dimensional pieces and a host of powerful drawings—fashioned for Maeterlinck several emotive landscapes (the drawing from the Hearn collection amongst them) where figures lie prone, pierced with pain and crushed by silence.

Ghent's hermetic remove from the raucous distractions of Brussels served Minne and Maeterlinck well, for their isolation firmed their bonds with the somnolent quiet of *Serres chaudes*, a moving and disconcerting anthology of short, almost monosyllabic poems with stirring cries of pain. First published privately with Léon Vanier, Paul Verlaine's editor, in a limited edition of 155 copies in 1889, this rare publication was adorned with several of Minne's most enigmatic woodcuts: figures listlessly asleep under a blanket of stars (fig. 4), or a nude with trailing hair crawling on all fours (fig. 5). But Maeterlinck's small book was also adorned with a full-page frontispiece (fig. 6), a large ink drawing that perfectly captures the muted cries and despair of Maeterlinck's dark anthology—a searing image that has its echo in the Hearn Family Trust drawing (plate 114). Indeed with the two gouaches so alike, one inevitably concludes that the gouache now at the McMullen is clearly a variant of the frontispiece that now serves *Serres chaudes*.



5. George Minne, nude crawling, from *Serres chaudes*, 1889.

*Serres chaudes*, we know, was an instant success, catapulting Maeterlinck onto the world stage after its publication in late May 1889 (he even fled to London to escape the publicity that came in its wake). But can the same be said of Minne's illustrations, especially his frontispiece? Charles van Lerberghe, an intimate during the late eighties of both Maeterlinck and Minne, himself a poet with keen sensitivities leaning toward the Pre-Raphaelites, understood the mute impalpabilities of their work, its quiet resignation drowned in muted sobs. Thus after a long appreciation of Maeterlinck's *Serres*, Van Lerberghe, writing for *La Wallonie*—a leading voice favoring the avant garde—turns to Minne's frontispiece and closes his review with a short but incisive appreciation. "The book," he writes "in its entirety is found in

this page of frozen terror" (*tout le livre est dans cette page d'immobile épouvante*[12])—words that in their dialectical appositeness capture the essence of Minne's drawing.

> M. George Minne's interpretation of the poem is magisterial: dreams of stone under somber eclipses; refuge for sinners in grottoes of ice; inextricable windings of creepers from forests of virgin sensations, a feel for mortal sins, mournful foliage, horizons of death, hands seeking succor...[13]

Indeed fear and malaise pervade Maeterlinck's *Serres chaudes* as it pervades every inch of Minne's frontispiece, a haunted and haunting landscape prefigured in the Hearn Family page.

With sure pen lines, and numerous shades of grays, the frontispiece and this related page (fig. 6 and plate 114) depict a deep landscape suffused with restive plants, a grotto with anxious maids, figures with long swaths of hair groping the ground, and cowled ashen prostrate figures alone or in pairs. But whether alone or not, they lie in fear and awe under layers of molten rocks and flailing vegetation. Indeed, both the frontispiece and its variant depict several impotent figures covered head to toe by a single shroud, awaiting judgment, their eyes vacuously staring at that which only they know. And while a long-stemmed lily stands tall by a silent stream (fig. 7), restless plants bend and rise, their long tapered leaves menacing the supine immobile figures at their feet. Surely Van Lerberghe captured the uneasy climate of these landscapes—in either version—when he praised Maeterlinck's verse for their "black flowers," verses that thrive in stifled, close quarters. "They are," he wrote, "the *Serres chaudes*, the supreme black flowers of this ill temperature of an overheated and feverish soul."

6. George Minne, frontispiece for *Serres chaudes*, 1889.

> Before these absolute lights all is transformed, the air is tepid, overwhelming, and stifling; one pales and hands tremble from fevers; we are bordering the limits of a strange land of death; one's eyes fill with a sulfurous clarity which leads one to discover a whole world of mysteries, a whole valley of the soul forever still.[14]

Sensitive to the *serre* and to its torpid air, Minne's figures awaken shadowless forms of distant bodies. Who are these figures, we ask, these mournful, heartsick figures with veinless hands and tear-shaped faces (figs. 8–9)? Indeed, sorely impotent, they futilely seek refuge, but where and from what...? Their wailing however reverberates through the *serre*—or, rather, throughout *Serres chaudes*' strophes. To quote but one, Maeterlinck's "Chasse Lasse" ("Lassitude's Hunting"):

> My soul is sick today,
> My soul is sick from lack,
> My soul hurts from silence,
> And my eyes fill it with ennui.[15]

7. George Minne, rising lily, detail from plate 114.

Beset by their lack, their souls sick and filled with ennui, Maeterlinck's figures, like Minne's, languidly expire. Illness pervades these poems as it pervades Minne's frontispiece and its variant. Focusing on the latter for instance, it is apparent in a figure in the middle ground—a darkly clad friar, a mendicant of sorts, wrapped in a hooded cowl (fig. 8). But for his ashen face and hands that hug the ground, he appears to be lost in darkness—a

darkness amplified by a looming presence that hovers over him, a dank, drooping vegetal rise that lurks over his person. By its side is a pair of legs, with trousers and bare feet. Ultimately this figure (but partially drawn) and the hooded figure to its right was vetted and replaced in the frontispiece with two groping figures set side by side, transfixing mirror images enveloped in long swaths of limp hair (fig. 9). In turn, these figures, alike in every way, extend their pale hands before them, their fear reverberating from one to the other, from their pallid faces to their waxen hands.

And such hands are found throughout *Serres chaudes*—hands that denote exhaustion, "frail waxen hands" (*frêles mains de cire*) or "sad shadowed hands" (*les ombres tristes de mes mains*[16]). What might these hands be but lost souls? Seeking *misericordia*, their plaintive cry, far from mute, can be heard from one ecstatic cry in Maeterlinck's doleful anthology to another. Hear their chant as intoned in "Attouchements" ("Touchings")!

8. George Minne, mendicant with overhead plant, detail from plate 114.

9. George Minne, groping figures, detail from fig. 6.

10. George Minne, swaddled figures on their backs, eyes open, detail from plate 114.

Have pity on hands unknown!
...
Have pity on hands too pale!
...
Have pity on hands too white and too moist!
...
Have pity on hands that have been amiss![17]

And pity we have, for these hands are ill and are struck with fever. But then, they belong to the *serre* and the *serre* nurtures illness. Illness and disquiet is everywhere in this enclosure as it is everywhere in both of Minne's images. It affects, for instance, a couple of swaddled figures that find their way in both the Hearn variant and in the frontispiece itself—a most curious pair nestled in the right-hand corner of these pages (fig. 10). Indeed set side by side and encased in all enveloping garments, their faces frozen in fear, they lie on their backs, terrorized by what they perceive but cannot know. Emile Verhaeren, a sensitive critic familiar with Ghent and its young poets, voiced their despair. Reviewing Maeterlinck's short book—one of the earliest reviews *Serres chaudes* enjoyed and one of its most perceptive—Verhaeren observed that Maeterlinck's verses speak to *l'âme contemporaine* ("to today's soul"). They address, he wrote, souls that yearn for "other things" (*avide d'autres choses*) and for *des formes qui s'effacent*, forms in flux, forms that lose themselves in something other even as they come into being. These verses are shaped by "thoughts," Verhaeren adds, that "glide in a hollow between that which departs and that which arrives" (*glissante dans le creux, entre ce qui s'en va et ce qui vient*[18]). Not unlike an elusive chameleon these images (whether Maeterlinck's or Minne's) recede and awaken in us undefined "regrets, transports [of anguish], unknown retreats" (*les regrets, les élancements, les reculs de l'incertitude*[19]). With Minne's and Maeterlinck's images wavering back and forth, uncertain of their fate, a "*poésie évolutive*" comes into being, "a *poésie* that is no longer, that is not yet. A *poésie*," in Verhaeren's words, "of [uncharted] intellectual frontiers; a *poésie* which we can liken to a wave that rises with the tide, that licks the shore, falls back... covers the sands only to uncover them..."[20] "Fluid images," underlie this art and, to quote Verhaeren again, any attempt to pin them down, to be precise, "would be an error" (*toute précision serait une erreur*[21]).

This in turn sheds light on the matted vegetation that insistently scourges our images. Indeed long ferns restlessly hover over Minne's still figures, whipping their airless surrounds into a frenzy. And as they incessantly droop, lurch, dangle, and climb over and under one another, flailing

and entangling their sagging fronds in a rising threatening wall, they badger and torment Minne's limpid figures—the latter transfixed and immobile. For the *serre*'s demands are all consuming. It feeds upon itself, and incarcerates all within it. Indeed no one can leave. Its doors are shut and all within it breathe its warm, still, heavy sluggish air. Gasping for breath, Minne's figures, with Maeterlinck's own, cry out: "My God! My God! When shall we have rain, / And snow and wind in the *serre*!"[22] And though as Minne's images testify, snow and rain has not entered the *serre*, a dry wind has. And this wind whips Minne's tangled exuberant shoots into a frenzy. All cower before its restless, rioting force...including another set of actors, three barely visible and tightly grouped figures, bare breasted and despairing (fig. 11). Are they the Three Graces? With their heads thrown back in anguish, they are set in a cave-like structure, a hollow of sorts capped with layers of oozing, drooping secretions. And above it all, on the upper margins of the frontispiece and its variant, hovers a faint silvery moon, a streak of light threatened by rising, broken shapes, willful, restless, inexorably advancing jagged forms—oneiric forms that thrive in the *serre*!

11. George Minne, "Three Graces" in a grotto, detail from plate 114.

And what is the *serre* but a claustrophobic enclosure, a frame that feeds on itself—a metaphor for Ghent, a city Maeterlinck appreciated for its many greenhouses or *serres*—"for Ghent," as Maeterlinck would later recall in his published reminiscences, was then a "city of horticulture and especially of floriculture and the greenhouses [*les serres*], cold, temperate and hot are everywhere" (*car Gand est une ville d'horticulture et surtout de floriculture et les serres froides, tempérées et chaudes y abondent*[23]). But as a *serre*, a closed habitation, incubating its own, Ghent rejected all sensuous and material distractions,[24] the worldly dynamics of a Brussels or a Paris. Verhaeren was well aware of this, knowing from his own experience that the city was not accepting of the new: "In Ghent! In Ghent they write, a few....In Ghent! Charles van Lerberghe, Grégoire Le Roy, Maurice Maeterlinck. In Ghent which is nothing, which offers them nothing but the polar cold of indifference and of refractory ignorance..."[25] But though Ghent spurned its writers, Ghent also spurred its writers. For by disparaging the new, Ghent sanctioned the old, and served as a haven from modernity. In turn this explains why Maeterlinck (and Minne) favored the writings of a late medieval Flemish mystic, Jan van Ruysbroeck (1293–1381). Maeterlinck's discovery of Ruysbroeck was an eye-opener, a *coup de foudre*, to quote one of his most eminent critics.[26] As he describes his discovery, we can see him trembling with excitement: "I have discovered (though not yet fully) a Hermit or an Enlightened One [*un Illuminé Flamand*] of the thirteenth century, Ruysbroeck l'Admirable....Well, I may say I have never encountered such joy, nor have I ever been as startled, he is a man of absolute genius..."[27]

Maeterlinck we learn had first discovered Ruysbroeck's writings in the mid-1880s and by 1889 had translated Ruysbroeck's great mystical treatise, *L'ornement des noces spirituelles*, a long and complex text, excerpts of which, accompanied by lengthy commentary, were first published in *La Revue Générale*.[28] Viewing Ruysbroeck as a true *doctor extaticus*, a "poet" who "weaves God a mantle through which we glimpse sight of him" (*qui tissent a Dieu, la robe, grace à laquelle nous l'entrevoyons par moments*[29]), Ruysbroeck led Maeterlinck to the *serre*, that is to the infinite possibilities of a life within. Indeed, the *serre* was Maeterlinck's Damascus, it liberated him from his own darkness.[30] As Maeterlinck later recalled, when he and his friends—and Minne was part of this inner circle, a *cénacle* of poets—first turned to Ruysbroeck, it was *comme si nous ouvrions uns serre au sortir d'une cave*[31] ("as if we came upon a *serre* leaving a cave")—with the cave not just being Ghent, but a site that reaches well beyond the city's walls, that lies out there, somewhere...outside! Hence Maeterlinck, with Minne, could appropriate for himself Ruysbroeck's cry: *Je n'ai rien a faire au dehors. Oh! Quelle horreur vers le dehors*[32] ("I have nothing to do with the outside. Oh! What horror I have toward the outside")—an ecstatic cry we read as Maeterlinck's (not just Ruysbroeck's) own shibboleth, a cry we can hear running through *Serres chaudes* and one affecting Minne's torpid images.

But the outside includes the inside as well, that is it consists of nebulous forces that can go either out or in or both at once. Curiously, we have Minne's own testimony on this, a revealing statement as recorded by Maeterlinck when the two friends were taking a walk. It was the evening of October 14, 1889 when reviews of the recently published *Serres chaudes* were still coming in. Minne is talking and Maeterlinck is listening, listening so closely that he later transcribed in his journal Minne's thoughts almost verbatim:

> Walking with G. Minne this evening (14 Oct.). He tells me most simply, awkwardly as a little child does, and with the difficulty we know he has speaking: "At times, observing without being seen a group of people, old ladies, women or men talking, I notice of-a-sudden something that is not our own, nor of any time, something that is perhaps beyond or before time."[33]

What might these words mean—words, I would argue of special value for Maeterlinck. For they allude to responses that negate time itself, immemorial perceptions that transcend the present and belie that which can be measured or even understood. Might Minne be in communion with the ineffable, with Ruysbroeck, with what was then affecting Maeterlinck? Is Minne, in a most earnest childlike way, saying that he knows something, something others do not know—something Maeterlinck would like to know? Are these words, at least as Maeterlinck understood them, reciting lessons Maeterlinck had gleaned from Ruysbroeck? Echoing Ruysbroeck?

Assuming there is some truth to this, might we say that Minne's haunting images—their rocks, their vegetation, their lost mendicants—are responding to something that lies beyond time? Are our figures awaiting and longing for that which is no longer? Maeterlinck, I believe, answers our question, for in his conclusion of his long article on Ruysbroeck of 1889 for *La Revue Générale*, we read:

> But I have spoken enough and I offer you this book like no other, where at times and in certain passages we will not fully understand *here*, without that causing us anxiety, for tomorrow we will learn the rest and then, perhaps, seeing its pages once more, we will be a little less frightened...[34]

The *serre* thus denotes a time that once existed, and speaks of that which once was and which was once experienced. But now having entered the *serre* and having given up the wintry chill of experience for the unbearable heat of the hothouse, Minne's (and Maeterlinck's) figures know that only in the *serre*, in its painful suffocations can they find the truth that lies outside—that is, the truth within, the truth inside.

1 Recently acquired by the Hearn Family Trust, the gouache before us is a most welcome addition to the corpus of nineteenth-century Belgian material, a work that is as rarefied as it is handsome.

2 For the error see Leo van Puyvelde, *George Minne* (Brussels: Éditions des Cahiers de Belgique, 1930), pl. 7, no. 7; Van Puyvelde's mistake however, has been noted in the literature—see Jo Haerens, "George Minne als boekillustrator," in *George Minne en de kunst rond 1900*, ed. Robert Hoozee, Monique Tahon-Vanroose, and Albert Alhadeff, exh. cat. (Ghent: Gemeentekrediet, 1982), 41–48.

3 See Inga Rossi-Schrimpf, *George Minne: Das Frühwerk und seine Rezeption in Deutschland und Österreich bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (Weimar: VDG, 2012).

4 Robert Hoozee and Catherine Vérleysen, eds., *L'univers de George Minne & Maurice Maeterlinck*, exh. cat. (Brussels: Fonds Mercator; Ghent: Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 2011).

5 As numerous studies on George Minne testify, Minne's limited œuvre was overshadowed by Auguste Rodin's protean production. And, given the great man's roots in Paris, it was ever more difficult for Minne to stand up to the latter's worldly fame.

6 Much has been written on *Serres chaudes*, an anthology of thirty-three poems, eight of which were free verse. For

an introduction to Maeterlinck's early works I especially favor Paul Gorceix's *Maurice Maeterlinck: Serres chaudes; Quinze chansons; La Princesse Maleine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983); also see Paul Gorceix, *Maurice Maeterlinck: L'arpenteur de l'invisible* (Brussels: Le Cri/Académie royale de langue et de littérature françaises, 2005).

7 Their years in Ghent have long been a favorite topic of historians. For a more recent discussion see Robert Hoozee, "George Minne et Maurice Maeterlinck, les années gantoises," in Hoozee and Vérleysen, *L'univers de George Minne*, 12–54; Denis Laoureux, *Maurice Maeterlinck et la dramaturgie de l'image: Les arts et les lettres dans le symbolisme en Belgique* (Brasschaat: Pandora, 2008).

8 Maeterlinck valued Minne for his boxing, while he, like Minne, a "bon boxeur," favored ice skating and would frequently skate to Bruges or, if the ice permitted, to Holland. See Jules Huret, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire* (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1891), 118; for Minne and boxing see Maurice Maeterlinck, *Bulles bleues: Souvenirs heureux* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1948), 191.

9 Shunned and disparaged, Maeterlinck and his literary friends quietly kept to themselves in Ghent: "Gand, notre bonne, sombre et vieille ville...était hermétiquement fermée à toute littérature....Du reste, nous ne parlions jamais aux profanes de nos secrètes délectations." Maeterlinck, *Bulles bleues*, 215.

10 Maurice Vanderleyden, "Le Salon des XX," *La Mosaique* (Feb. 19, 1891). All translations by the author unless otherwise noted: "M. George Minne est un poète, il a le sens intime des douleurs, des attitudes tristes....Son talent et celui de M. Maeterlinck sont symétriques; comme lui il comprend le vague, l'ébauche, l'incertain; comme lui il a des souvenirs ancestraux..."

11 Citing a few strophes from Rodenbach's "Paysage de Ville" of 1884: "Peu de passants et rien que la vague rumeur / D'un chariot lointain, là-bas, dans une rue / Rien qu'une triste plainte incessamment décrue / Comme le souffle lent d'une ville qui meurt."

12 Charles van Lerberghe, "Maurice Maeterlinck, *Serres chaudes*," *La Wallonie* 7 (July 31, 1889): 231.

13 Van Lerberghe, 231. "L'interprétation faite du poème par M. George Minne est magistrale: sommeils de pierre sous de sombre éclipse, refuge de pécheurs en ces grottes de glace, inextricables liane de cette forêt vierge des sensations, air de péché mortel, mornes feuillages, horizons de mort, mains secourables..."

14 Van Lerberghe, 227.

15 "Mon âme est malade aujourd'hui, / Mon âme est malade d'absence, / Mon âme a le mal des silences, / Et mes yeux l'éclairent d'ennui."

16 Quoting lines from "Oraison," where heart-rending cries seem to burst with each strophe.

17 "Ayez pitié des mains étranges! // Ayez pitié des mains trop pâles! // Ayez pitié des mains trop blanches et trop moites! // Ayez pitié des mains mauvaises!"

18 Emile Verhaeren, "Maurice Maeterlinck: *Serres chaudes*," *L'Art Moderne* 9, no. 29 (July 21, 1889): 225–27 as reprinted in Emile Verhaeren, *Impressions*, vol. 3 ( Paris: Mercure de France, 1928), 132.

19 Verhaeren, 132.

20 Verhaeren, 132: "Poésie évolutive qui n'est plus, qui n'est pas encore. Poésie de frontière intellectuelle. Poésie pareille à la vague qui monte avec la marée, lèche le ri vage, se retire, remonte...couvre les sables, les découvre..."

21 Verhaeren, 132.

22 The first of many wails pleading for liberation. With these lines from the poem "Serre chaude" with which *Serres chaudes* opens. "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Quand aurons-nous la pluie, / Et la neige et le vent dans la serre!"

23 Maeterlinck, *Bulles bleues*, 203. With somber melancholy, recalling his years in Ghent as a youth, Maeterlinck observes: "Quand j'étais haut comme trois pommes, rien ne me semblait plus agréable, plus mystérieux que les abris vitrés où régnait la puissance du soleil."

24 Maeterlinck, 215, where Maeterlinck with undisguised irony writes that he and his friends were then treated not as miscreants but with "une dédaigneuse bienveillance, comme d'inoffensifs minus habentes, dont les années assagiraient la monomanie."

25 [Emile Verhaeren], "*La Princesse Maleine*," *L'Art Moderne* 9, no. 46 (Nov. 17, 1889): 361–63 as reprinted in Emile Verhaeren, *Pages belges* (Brussels: La Renaissance du livre, 1926), 57.

26 Gorceix, *Maeterlinck: Serres chaudes*, 10.

27 Gorceix, 9–10. Here we are quoting a note from December 24, 1885 written to Rodolphe Darzens, a friend whom Maeterlinck knew from a Brussels review, *La Basoche*; for an appreciation of this correspondence see R. O. J. van Nuffel, "Une lettre de Maeterlinck à Darzens," *Annales de la Fondation Maurice Maeterlinck* 5 (1959): 39–47. "J'ai découvert (à peu près) un Ermite ou un Illuminé Flamand du XIII siècle, Ruysbroeck l'Admirable....Eh bien, jamais je n'ai éprouvé une joie ni un étonnement pareils, c'est l'homme du genie absolu..."

28 Maeterlinck began translating *L'ornement de noces spirituelles de Ruysbroeck l'Admirable* with Ruysbroeck's *Le livre des XII béguines* as early as 1885, but only the former work was published in book form in 1891. Maeterlinck was well aware of a previous translation of *Les noces* from the Flemish by Ernest Hello. But Hello's French translation of 1869 was deemed most inadequate by Maeterlinck—hence his own detailed translation as first published in 1889. See Maurice Maeterlinck, "*L'ornement de noces spirituelles de Ruysbroeck l'Admirable*," *La Revue Générale* (Oct.–Nov. 1889): 453–82, 633–68. For a review of Maeterlinck's 1891 publication on Ruysbroeck see Rémy de Gourmont, "*L'ornement des noces spirituelles*," *Mercure de France* (May 1891): 309.

29 Maeterlinck, "*Ruysbroeck l'Admirable*," 668.

30 Ruysbroeck and *Serres chaudes* have long been seen together. For an early appreciation of this linkage see Joseph Hanse, "De Ruysbroeck aux *Serres chaudes*," *Bulletin de l'Académie Royale de Langue et de Littérature Françaises* 39, no. 2 (1961): 75–126.

31 Maeterlinck, "*Ruysbroeck l'Admirable*," 664.

32 Maeterlinck, 455.

33 Maurice Maeterlinck, *Carnets de travail* (1881–90), ed. and footnotes Fabrice van de Kerckhove (Brussels: Archives & Musée de la littérature, 2002), 967–68. "Promené avec G. Minne ce soir (14 oct.). Il me dit très simplement, très maladroitement comme un tout petit enfant, et avec cette difficulté de parler qui lui est particulière: 'Parfois quand j'observe sans être vu un groupe de personnes, vieilles femmes, dames ou hommes, en conversation, j'entrevois tout à coup quelque chose qui n'est pas de ce temps, ni d'aucun temps, mais d'avant tout les temps peut-être.'"

34 Maeterlinck, "*Ruysbroeck l'Admirable*," 668. "Mais j'en ai parlé suffisamment; et voici que je vous ouvre ce livre trop vraiment sans pareil, qu'en quelques endroits nous ne comprendrons peut-être pas entièrement *ici*, sans que cela doive nous inquiéter, puisque demain nous apprendrons le reste et alors, sans doute, en revoyant ce que nous avons entrevu, aurons nous un peu moins peur..."

# THE FOUR SEASONS OF LÉON SPILLIAERT'S MIND

Anne Adriaens-Pannier

When a landscape is interpreted by an artist, it is often a reflection of his mental landscape. For Léon Spilliaert (1881–1946) this adage is especially true because of the unique geography of his habitat.[1] The city of Ostend, half fashionable seaside resort, half provincial town that wanted to look like a metropolis, combines the atmosphere of sea spray carried by the wind and the inspiration of literary and architectural cultures. As a young teen in 1897–98, Spilliaert participated in the life of his time and a sketchbook testifies to his interest in the history of humanity in compositions done in a very realistic style.[2] However, when he decided to pursue an artistic career despite no training whatsoever, he opted for a stripped-down style and sober subject matter. With india ink, brushed in layered veils ranging from gray to deep black, he translated the observations of his wide-eyed gaze, curious about everything, onto paper. He allowed his mind to roam through the world of melancholy and the literary imagination; each image reflects the desire to organize his inspiration in a manner that is natural and proper to it. In this, Spilliaert shares in an evolution that could be universal. He progressed through the stages of creating order from chaos, to the explanation of natural phenomena, and beyond that to the relationship between the creator and humanity, and finally to the suffering inflicted on people.

1. Léon Spilliaert, *Landscape with Slender Trees*, 1900–02. India ink wash, brush, pen, and Conté crayon on paper, 25.9 x 35.8 cm, private collection.

## SPRING

When the young Spilliaert walked along the seawall promenade, preferably when the sea was rough, or in the backcountry with the great wide horizons of the polders blasted by westerly winds, it was not as a romantic who longs to immerse himself in a wild nature that threatens to engulf him. He prefers a different type of nature, one that he patiently constructs in supernatural compositions, ordering the elements in a new way. He depicts a nature in which the trees grow close to each other in peace and orderliness. He organizes them like selected elements of décor, forming hedges that hide a horizon where a secular light shines, or like a harmonious ensemble of elegant beings facing the threat of unpredictable weather, such as *Landscape with Slender Trees* (1900–02, fig. 1). The threadlike lines evoking tall narrow trunks are traced by a very small brush. The branches quiver and rustle with the rhythm of the play of vibrating dots. Light accents are manipulated, and the artist blurred the material to give a transparent or overloaded intensity, evoking a heavy and disturbing atmosphere.

2. Léon Spilliaert, *Contemplations*, 1900. India ink, brush, pen, and colored pencil on paper, 18.4 x 28.8 cm, private collection.

Beyond the everyday usefulness of the tree for man, its essential value in nature seems to contain a spiritual element for Spilliaert. Remarkable in its particular approach is another youthful work called *Contemplations* (1900, fig. 2). The term "contemplation" has been mainly used by Western Latin authors, while Greek writers, closer to the East, chose the term "mysticism." There is a subtle difference between the two terms: "the word contemplation finds its origin in man and is active in nature, whereas mysticism is directed to God and is passive in nature."[3] Spilliaert intuitively translated the true meaning of the word "contemplation" with great precision in representing the silhouettes of the trees in their symbiosis with a human silhouette viewed from the back, actively observing the landscape of the polders. However, the observant viewer slowly realizes that he is in a landscape foreign to the country of pollarded willows, another land where the silhouettes of squat pyramids loom on the horizon while the top of the central trunk seems to rest on a column with Ionic volutes. The artist willed his explorer's spirit to escape into a dreamlike world filled with juxtapositions of contemporary and ancient cultures.

This spirit of mysterious journey, of ancestral encounters, of dream walks in worlds beyond everyday reality, was crystallized in Spilliaert's mind through contact with the symbolic dramas of Maurice Maeterlinck. Putting himself in 1902 at the service of Edmond Deman, the Brussels publisher of Stéphane Mallarmé, Emile Verhaeren, and Maurice Maeterlinck among others, Spilliaert discovered the best of literary creation and symbolist painting. An enlightened amateur, Deman supported artists of the groups *Les XX* and *La Libre esthétique* and built a fine collection of works by Maurice Denis, Odilon Redon, Félicien Rops, and Edgar Degas. Spilliaert's association with Deman allowed him to evolve in a fertile intellectual environment, where the combination of writing and the visual arts formed a source of creative impulse. In commissioning Spilliaert to illustrate his own three-volume copy of the *Théâtre* of Maeterlinck that he had just published, Deman helped deepen the roots of Spilliaert's natural inclination to translate into visual images the plastic compositions that haunted his mind.[4]

The drawings of the first period, whose inspiration is taken as much from philosophical as literary sources, reflect Spilliaert's experiences. They are often impregnated with a dark atmosphere and a foreboding anxiety.

In the symbolist plays by Maeterlinck, Spilliaert could immerse himself in a universe that was viscerally very close to him. Maeterlinck broke the conventional rules of dramatic literature, renouncing anecdotes, limiting emotional impulses, and simplifying the psychology of his characters. The settings where the characters develop are devoid of natural geographical references and his landscapes reflect a languid and timeless atmosphere with minimal action.

Along with these illustrations for Maeterlinck's plays, many autonomous designs flowed from the brush of Spilliaert. A fascinating image that unfolds in shades of gray and black depicts the imaginary world that the playwright created for his character-types—king, queen, princess, and nurse (plate 118). Before the wide plains of the polders, divided by a path that curves toward the horizon, are three frail trees whose contours are precisely accentuated with bright blue gouache. This static sobriety, where the foreground and background are clearly delineated, is the perfect synthesis of a theatrical space. Above right, Spilliaert wrote, in the same handwriting as the page title of the piece *La Princess Maleine*, the words "MAETERLINCK THÉÂTRE." The same inscription appears several times in other independent drawings that repeatedly suggest reincarnations of the actors of the plays, women with capes billowed by the wind, or apparitions symbolizing evil and disordered characters.

Although Maeterlinck attached great importance to the pictorial nature of language, Spilliaert however had the advantage of his visual art form, because the shapes and atmosphere that he evokes do not unfold in time as they do in language, but are instantly presented to the eyes of the beholder, making the sublime thought durable.

In primitive and animist faith, natural elements such as thunder, lightning, rain, and wind are translated into images. Living on the coast, Spilliaert knew the power of the howling sea wind. Through its power, water

and earth were divided, and adventurous sailors lost their lives. Without it, however, there would be no procreation, no life. The spectacle of clouds racing over the ocean fascinated him.

In *The Cloud* (1902, fig. 3) Spilliaert gives the shapeless mass the silhouette of a woman's body endlessly floating and drifting. Continuously unfolding in the gracefully undulating curves of a cloud, the mythic figure defies the laws of gravity.

3. Léon Spilliaert, *The Cloud*, 1902. Pencil, india ink wash, and brush on paper, 25.3 x 37.2 cm.

The female gender, which never ceased to provide the artist matter for reflection on the merits of her function in society—on her power for good or evil, or on the strength of her symbolism—remains at the heart of Spilliaert's production from 1900 to 1903. In turn, he presents her as the woman-tree, flourishing like the Mother Goddess, like the Virgin, as a conscious entity symbolizing the autumn, or all the power of the Earth! But beyond the role of virgin, woman also reveals herself as the Temptress who uses her body for pleasure and procreation. Beyond the iconography of a sophisticated symbolism, he seeks his models in everyday reality and accentuates the ambivalence of his characters. These women, often distorted in their androgynous appearance, appear to be some kind of characters from ancient myths. But despite the need to keep challenging an expanding modern world, Spilliaert cannot evade ethical questioning. He continues to question the meaning of existence and the reason for death, where the fundamentals of good and evil are found.

Some contemporaries of Spilliaert, such as Alfred Kubin, created a population of mythical creatures to give shape to their angst. Animal deformation is often balanced, however, by a harmonious natural setting like an idyllic garden. When Léon Spilliaert lets himself be carried away by imagining a visionary and allegorical monster he places it in a pathetic loneliness lying on a rock (fig. 4). The composition is accompanied by a long quotation from the writings of Chateaubriand, offering a pessimistic view of humanity: "Man, you are nothing but a fleeting dream, a painful dream..."[5]

In the *Songs of Maldoror* by Isidore Ducasse, the self-styled Comte de Lautréamont, the poet evokes the image of groups of birds of prey who triumph as predators among other creatures. Spilliaert does not literally reproduce this image, rather he chooses in different versions to represent the bird of prey alone. When inspired by the rhythm of Lautréamont's verses, Spilliaert indulges in visions of a harpy, and in *Bird of Prey* of 1902, he gives her a female form (plate 117). Clinging to the rail of a ship, braced against the wind, a woman braves the brute force of the sea. At first glance she appears to be an elegant woman, however the eagle profile of her face quickly gives her a threatening appearance. Her limbs also undergo a metamorphosis, evoking claws. In a subsequent transformation, the veil floating in the wind is replaced by wings, which deliberately suggests a fallen angel. The raptor, the fallen angel of Spilliaert, is not really cursed, but uses her dark forces to assert her power of dominion over nature.

This message is strong and perhaps unexpected from a young artist who a few years later will not be afraid to face the descent into the abyss, beyond the physical and psychological decline, that could offer deliverance from a life tormented by death. The series of self-portraits that he undertook between 1907 and 1908 are sublime, haunting in the interrogation of his inner identity. He will analyze his reflected image until the space in the mirror collapses in an oppressive atmosphere of truth. This mirror of human nature no longer allows escape, but is the setting of an unequal battle between man and his nature.

4. Léon Spilliaert, *Allegorical Representation of Man under the Aspect of a Bleeding Monstrous Animal*, 1903. Pencil, india ink, brush, and pen on paper, 25.2 x 33.4 cm, Print Cabinet, Royal Library of Belgium, Brussels, F 15711.

5. Léon Spilliaert, *Kursaal and Promenade in Ostend*, 1908. India ink wash, brush, colored pencil, and pastel on paper, 70 x 54 cm, private collection.

## SUMMER

After the exploration of cosmic nature, which each year starts a new cycle that is a source of astonishment and challenge to a young mind, comes a new phase of questioning. In the second stage of his life, Léon Spilliaert focuses on the achievements of human beings and their ingenious technical constructions. By the end of the nineteenth century, and especially during the reign of King Léopold II, the seaside town of Ostend saw an important architectural expansion.

The themes of his works from this period come mainly from his personal experiences: night walks on the seawall promenade, on the beach, and in the deserted city. From the monumental architecture of Ostend, Spilliaert recreates spatial entities that transcend their reference to reality. He shared in this way the attitude described by Piet Mondrian who proposed the term "abstract-realist" for his art. "The abstract-realist artist, who lives in a sensory world, collects moments of 'disinterested contemplation,' moments he synthesizes to make 'a permanent vision' then fixes it on the canvas."[6] Spilliaert always emphasized these links to reality: "I see a scene, I take from it an interpretation, an impression. Thus realistic cerebral work."[7] But unlike Mondrian, Spilliaert will never go to pure abstraction, he will reach at most a certain degree of simplified abstraction.

He analyzes the massive arches that open in the wall of the dike, the round and narrow elevation of the Kursaal, the pull of the void of the streets leading up to the seawall and the endless perspective of the colonnade. Colors remain restricted: muffled pastels—brown, blue, green—and colored chalk, or simple washes of india ink. The Kursaal and the Ostend seawall are recurring motifs (fig. 5). Several versions of this subject present divergent points of view. They develop from the vertical treatment of the volumes of the façade to the three-part division of the composition by a set of converging diagonals that are balanced against a vast horizon. Spilliaert manipulates both diagonal and straight lines with the same dramatic feeling.

In a somber view of Ostend on a foggy day, *Hofstraat in Ostend* (1908), the diagonals divide the space (plate 119). In their upward course narrowing in an astonishing rectilinear perspective, they create an atmosphere of gloomy isolation. It is subtly mitigated by an opening in the distance: between the rows of houses, a street lamp occupies a strategic place. In the earlier works of Spilliaert, light has a symbolic value. Around 1908–09, light is given another—and double—meaning: neither bright light nor veiled element, light source nor reflection. It is left entirely blank on the white paper in patches, or concentrated in small circles and in extended vertical surfaces. Light defines the structure of the image.

In the version in our exhibition, the light source is drained into the vertiginous empty street, foreshadowing a terrible anguish that will invade the city. Another version of *Hofstraat* is less threatening. The lamp light falls vertically, stretched across the wet pavement. Breaks in the sky announce the end of the bad weather. The treatment of the façades in the two versions is limited to architectural details such as loggias and the salient parts of windows. The handling of the brush in plate 119 is sharper and more nervous, however. His vision seeks to capture the essence of the impression of the lived experience, and cannot bear more enhancement by the blue pencil that lightens the severity of the place.

Spilliaert was ahead of his time in seeking to make his art more expressive and introducing innovative stylistic elements. Later, some of his formal discoveries were brought to their culmination by others, often in a theoretical context.

## FALL

One of Spilliaert's great strengths is how, without being limited by any pictorial style, he develops a wide variety of subjects, striving each time to deepen the meaning even beyond the narrative line. He deliberately pursued an original artistic expression. After his large architectural compositions, he turned to a renewed interest in the sea, harbor life, the world of fishing, and its protagonists. He introduced color in the form of chalk and pastel that permeated his large drawings on cardboard. He contrasted scenes of working life with scenes of relaxation. He portrayed the excitement of Carnival and the carefree attitudes of summer visitors to the seaside.

And then came the war and its oppressive climate that crushed all freedom of thought for the foreseeable future. The port city of Ostend was caught up in this torment and subjected to violent attacks. Spilliaert was enlisted—either willingly or by force—in the civic guard. He witnessed the march of enemy troops and was stunned by their destructive acts. In *Scene of War* of 1917, he gives free rein to his interpretation of the life of the soldiers, filtering the cruel reality through his imagination (plate 120). Under a leaden sky of threatening clouds, the beach littered with debris after a battle reveals desolation and human misery. A small company of soldiers, with shako military hats surmounted with bloody plumes, sits on the ground for a short rest. The corpses of their unfortunate companions rot in the open air. Far off in the rear, a tower keeps watch like a lighthouse in a tempest. The single jagged bayonet blade of a sentry seems to rise like a lightning bolt in the sky. None of the details of this armed company corresponds to the reality of the First World War, however. Spilliaert interpreted the bloody conflict by evoking romantic images of the long outmoded imperial army. While a "dirty war" raged outside, the virtual reality created by Spilliaert turned not to the present or future, but to the past. Physical violence provokes psychological violence and awakens the death instinct.

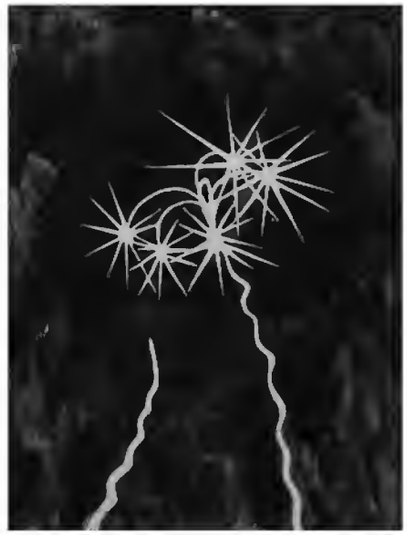
6. Léon Spilliaert, *Star Shell over the Harbor of Ostend*, 1917. Pencil, watercolor, gouache, and Conté crayon on paper, 43.8 x 28.6 cm, private collection.

Despite everything, and even though a pacifist to the depths of his being, Spilliaert was able to find pictorial inspiration in the cruel night bombardments. Several compositions in slightly acid tones, beautifully drawn and painted in watercolors, make the elegant light traces of nocturnal shells that illuminated the quays of the port and the sails of the fishing boats seem marvelous (fig. 6). A watercolor on a dark blue background, *Bright Shell Traces in the Night at Ostend* (1917), transforms the danger of death into a dazzling play of fireworks (fig. 7). The border between suspended death and wonder is almost abolished. By a simple twist of the imagination, the artist could be transported into another world, one that negates evil and danger. This is highlighted by comparison with the contemporary image from an official British photographer (fig. 8), showing the brilliant arcs of cascading star shells illuminating the battlefield.

As with his compatriot James Ensor, Spilliaert sought to emphasize the failings and hypocrisy of the world through his derisory and deliberately ironic interpretations; it was a world in decline that was so aptly called by Stefan Zweig "the world of yesterday."[8]

## WINTER

Having left Ostend in 1917 to settle in Brussels, Léon Spilliaert was happily married and the father of a lovely little girl. He waited until the year 1920 to re-establish links with his hometown, and above all with the sea and its surroundings. In his youth, the sea inspired him to create subtle evocations of atmosphere, and later almost geometrical compositions. Now he began to discover the flickers of light and color in this large moving element. For this he returned to the transparency of watercolor with its minimal materiality. In these new seascapes, the layout remained classic, with attention evenly divided between the sea and the sky (fig. 9). The rendering



7. Léon Spilliaert, *Bright Shell Traces in the Night at Ostend*, 1917. Watercolor on paper, 32.7 x 24.8 cm, Hearn Family Trust.

8. Exploding star shells, Battle of Ypres, 1917.

9. Léon Spilliaert, *Blue and Orange Seascape*, 1922. Gouache and casein on paper, 49.9 x 74.7 cm, private collection.

10. Léon Spilliaert, *Boat in the Tempest*, 1921. Watercolor and gouache on paper, 47.7 x 63 cm, private collection.

of the clouds above the horizon reveals an impression of organic unity between the different natural elements. Some motifs suggest a sporadic human presence: fishing boats sailing, or a departing steamboat. In *Boat in the Tempest* of 1921, colors collide in a chaotic manner that matches the reality inherent in the representation of a storm (fig. 10). Threatening clouds, dark blue and white, overlook the sea and are reflected in the water.

A different harmony emerges in a view of the harbor near fisherman's wharf, the *Fishing Port, Ostend* of 1923 (plate 122). Rocking on the crest of the swells, protected from the weather by the century-old walls, the small boats are safely at rest. Fragile craft, when the sails are folded. Only their erect masts oppose the architectural mass of the buildings of the port. The rhythm of the vertical and horizontal lines of force in beautiful equilibrium supports the expression of timelessness. The boats have left the port and will return day after day, year after year, to ensure the survival of man. By the use of muted, almost dull, colors, Léon Spilliaert provokes a sense of melancholy, a vague sadness that could invade the soul. Only the harmoniously quivering reflections in the clear water animate the gentle nightfall.

When the artist left his familiar environment of the sea and the port of Ostend in 1935, it did not cause a rupture in his production. In his imagination, he had already traversed the foreign shores of rivers winding around age-old boulders overhung with fortresses and churches, as seen in *The Rock* of 1917–19 (plate 121). The contact with different horizons brought an enlargement of spirit that clearly energized him.

11. Léon Spilliaert, *The Park*, c. 1944. India ink, pen, and watercolor on paper, 47.4 x 61.7 cm, private collection.

Settling in Brussels, Spilliaert explored the surroundings of his new homes and discovered a wealth of unexploited visual images from the point of view of landscape. Parks, and especially the Forest of Soignes, became his favorite places for walks.

His compositions, inspired by the hedges and walls surrounding gardens, the wild plains of the Fagnes, steep banks along the Meuse, and by dark woods and forests, became more enigmatic than ever. They are not descriptive, anecdotal, nor symbolist, nor purely imbued with atmosphere. They derive their expressive strength from a mysterious symbiosis between reality and a newfound imagination, as in *The Park* of c. 1944 (fig. 11). There was above all the intuition of a spirit oriented toward poetry, and at the end of his life, even more focused on mysticism. Spilliaert was at this time an avid reader of the poetry of Virgil and Walt Whitman. Whitman's poetic soul led him to describe himself as a cosmos, affirming how he felt the world expanding within him. He feels at peace in nature; trees and grass brought him an intimate joy.[9]

Ever since his youth, trees were a constant presence in Spilliaert's works. Reading Virgil opened his mind even more to the particularities of each tree, their specific place in cultivated or wild habitats, and their individual characteristics. As he formerly distinguished a wide variety of forms in the structure of dikes, breakwaters, and beaches, Spilliaert now constructed a complete vocabulary, almost architectural, from the unique characteristics of his preferred age-old trees. According to their species, oak or beech, he envisions the smooth or grooved trunks as columns, or even as gnarled sets of columns whose upper branches support the treetops. Spilliaert never painted a tree from life: "He contemplated it indefinitely, he understood it, he enjoyed it thoroughly and then he went home, and interpreted it in its own way, very precisely, a little mordant and tranquil at the same time..."[10] He lends to the trees the force to translate their vital energy, as depicted in *Trunks of Beech Trees in Spring*, 1945 (plate 123). To create this he used a new technique, employing veils of watercolor to capture the light and give a lyrical modulation to the ensemble. The volume of the gray tree is emphasized by a strong and thick line of ink, while a play of delicate lines drawn in pen makes the outgrowths and fissures of the ancient bark come alive.

In these late works the artist's field of vision has significantly contracted and the tight formation of tree-columns blocks the gaze from opening out to infinity. Serenity and acceptance: this is probably the intended message. Feeling and wisdom are united in a timeless image in which everything is possible and everything is perhaps accomplished.

Translated from the French by Jeffery Howe

1 For recent publications on Spilliaert, see Anne Adriaens-Pannier's *Spilliaert: Le regard de l'âme* (Ghent: Ludion, 2006); *Léon Spilliaert: Collection des Musées des Beaux-Arts d'Ostende et L'arbre dans des collections privées* (Verviers: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 2006); *Léon Spilliaert: Het literair en kritisch portret van een kunstenaar* (Bruges: Uitgeverij Van de Wiele-Het Spilliaert Huis, 2016); and *Léon Spilliaert: Illustrateur d'Emile Verhaeren, Maurice Maeterlinck* (Bruges: Uitgeverij Van de Wiele), 2017 (in press).

2 Sketchbook of youthful drawings, 1897–98, 23 pages, 21.1 x 17 cm, pencil on paper, private collection, unpublished.

3 John Ferguson, *Encyclopedie van de mystiek en de mysteriegodsdiensten*, trans. Simon Vinkenoog (Baarn: Het Wereldvenster, 1979), 57.

4 *Maurice Maeterlinck: Théâtre* (Brussels: Edmond Deman, 1901–02), no. 110. The three volumes were augmented by Léon Spilliaert with 348 illustrations, including vignettes and full pages.

5 The quotation is from the concluding lines of Chateaubriand's novel *Atala* (1801): "O homme, tu n'es qu'un songe rapide, un rêve douloureux..." See François-René de Chateaubriand, *Atala*, trans. James Spence Harry, ill. Gustave Doré (New York: Cassell, 1884), 171.

6 Piet Mondrian, "Natural Reality and Abstract Reality," published in *De Stijl* in thirteen issues from June to August 1919; cited by Yves-Alain Bois, "De Beeldenstormer," in *Piet Mondriaan, 1872–1944*, exh. cat. (The Hague: Haags Gemeentemuseum, 1994), 319.

7 *Spilliaert parle de son art (1924–1925), propos recueillis par Henri Storck*, Archives of Contemporary Art in Belgium, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 81839/91.

8 Stefan Zweig, *Le monde d'hier: Souvenirs d'un Européen*, trans. Serge Niémetz (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1998).

9 Walt Whitman's poetry was well-known in European literary circles; see Betsy Erkkila, "Whitman and French Symbolism," in *Walt Whitman among the French: Poet and Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 51–96.

10 Albert Dasnoy, in a screenplay for televised film on Spilliaert, Brussels, Feb. 20, 1961, 3. Archives of Contemporary Art in Belgium, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, 19622, 4.

# PLATES

All photographs appear courtesy of lenders, with these additional acknowledgments: Art Resource, NY: 36–37; Haley Carey: 35; Gary Wayne Gilbert (Boston College): 1; Eric Gould (Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design): 74; Jeffery Howe: 70–73, 120; Christopher Soldt (Boston College): 4–27, 29–34, 38–66, 69, 75, 78–79, 81–91, 94–95, 98–114, 117, 119, 121–22; Yana van Dyke: 28, 67, 76–77, 92, 116.

1. Circle of the Master of the Troyes Missal
*Christ Crucified between the Virgin and St. John*, c. 1460
illumination on parchment, 27 x 19 cm
John J. Burns Library, Boston College, MS.1984.044

2. Albrecht Dürer (1471 Nuremberg–Nuremberg 1528)
*The Nativity*, 1504
engraving on ivory laid paper, 18.4 x 10.2 cm
McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, gift of Kimberly and Steven Rockefeller, 2013.22

3. Augustin Hirschvogel (1503 Nuremberg–Vienna 1553)
*River Landscape with Wooden Bridge*, c. 1546
etching on paper, 13.9 x 20.8 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**4. Pieter Bruegel** (c. 1525 Breda–Brussels 1569)
engraved by **Philips Galle** (1537 Haarlem–Antwerp 1612)
published by **Hieronymus Cock** (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
***Allegory of Prudence,*** 1559–60
engraving on paper, 23 x 29.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**5. Pieter Bruegel** (c. 1525 Breda–Brussels 1569)
engraved by **Philips Galle** (1537 Haarlem–Antwerp 1612)
published by **Hieronymus Cock** (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
***Allegory of Fortitude,*** 1559–60
engraving on paper, 22.5 x 29 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**6. Pieter Bruegel** (c. 1525 Breda–Brussels 1569)
engraved by **Pieter van der Heyden** (c. 1525 Antwerp–Berchem 1569)
published by **Hieronymus Cock** (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
***Summer,*** drawing 1568, print 1570–72
engraving on paper, 22.5 x 29 cm
Hearn Family Trust

7. Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568 Brussels–Antwerp 1625)
engraved by Crispijn de Passe the Elder (1564 Arnemuiden–Utrecht 1637)
*Path over a Valley*, c. 1600
engraving on paper, 22.7 x 32.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

8. Hieronymus Cock (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
*Landscape with Labyrinth of Crete,* from *Landscapes with Biblical and Mythological Scenes,* 1558
etching on paper, 20.3 x 29.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**9.** After **Jacob de Gheyn II** (1565 Antwerp–The Hague 1629)
print attributed to **Andries Jacobsz. Stock** (1580 Antwerp–The Hague 1648)
published by **Nicolaes de Clerck**
***Landscape with the Fall of Icarus,*** 1608–12
etching on paper, 10.8 x 17.1 cm
Hearn Family Trust

10. Hieronymus Cock (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
after Matthijs Cock (c. 1509 Antwerp–Antwerp 1548)
*Apollo and Daphne*, from *Landscapes with Biblical and Mythological Scenes*, 1558
etching on paper, 22.2 x 30.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**11. Hieronymus Cock** (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
after **Matthijs Cock** (c. 1509 Antwerp–Antwerp 1548)
***Landscape with Mercury Holding Argus's Head,*** 1558
etching on paper, 22.6 x 32.7 cm
Hearn Family Trust

12. **Hieronymus Cock** (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
after **Matthijs Cock** (c. 1509 Antwerp–Antwerp 1548)
***Landscape with Cephalus and Procris,*** 1558
etching on paper, 21.8 x 30.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

13. Hieronymus Cock (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
possibly after Matthijs Cock (c. 1509 Antwerp–Antwerp 1548)
*Abraham and Isaac on the Road to the Place of Sacrifice,* 1558
etching on paper, 22.9 x 31.3 cm
Hearn Family Trust

14. Joannes van Doetecum (c. 1530 Deventer [active Antwerp 1554–59]–Haarlem c. 1605)
or Lucas van Doetecum (Deventer [active Antwerp 1554–59]–Deventer, before 1589)
etching after sketch by Lucas Gassel (c. 1490 Helmond–Brussels 1568/9)
published by Hieronymus Cock (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
*Landscape with Abraham and Angels,* 1560–64
etching on paper, 22.9 x 32.4 cm
Hearn Family Trust

15. Joannes van Doetecum (c. 1530 Deventer [active Antwerp 1554–59]–Haarlem c. 1605)
or Lucas van Doetecum (Deventer [active Antwerp 1554–59]–Deventer, before 1589)
etching after sketch by Lucas Gassel (c. 1490 Helmond–Brussels 1568/9)
published by Hieronymus Cock (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
*Landscape with St. Jerome,* 1560–64
etching on paper, 22.9 x 32.4 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**16. Nicolaes de Bruyn** (1571 Antwerp–Rotterdam 1656)
after **Gillis van Coninxloo III** (1544 Antwerp–Amsterdam 1607)
***Christ and Disciples on the Way to Emmaus,*** c. 1604
etching on paper, 44 x 58.7 cm
Hearn Family Trust

17. Hans Bol (1534 Mechelen–Amsterdam 1593)
engraved by Pieter van der Heyden (c. 1525 Antwerp–Berchem 1569)
published by Hieronymus Cock (1510 [1518?] Antwerp–Antwerp 1570)
*Winter*, 1570
engraving on paper, 23.3 x 29.4 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**18. Jacob de Gheyn II** (1565 Antwerp–The Hague 1629)
etching after painting by **Roelandt Savery** (1576 Kortrijk [Courtrai]–Utrecht 1639)
***Winter Landscape with Golf and Hockey,*** c. 1600
etching on paper, 10.8 x 17.4 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**19. Paul Brill** (1554 Antwerp–Rome 1626)
*Wooded Landscape*, n.d.
pen, ink, and wash on paper, 19 x 26 cm
Hearn Family Trust

20. Paul Brill (1554 Antwerp–Rome 1626)
*Landscape with Artist Overlooking a Valley*, n.d.
pen, ink, and wash on paper, 18.1 x 25.7 cm
Hearn Family Trust

21. Roelandt Savery (1576 Kortrijk [Courtrai]–Utrecht 1639)
*Alpine Landscape with Torrent and Hunter*, c. 1608
oil on copper, 22.5 x 17.1 cm
Hearn Family Trust

22. Roelandt Savery (1576 Kortrijk [Courtrai]–Utrecht 1639)
*Alpine Landscape with Three Hunters*, c. 1608
oil on copper, 22.5 x 16.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**23. Roelandt Savery** (1576 Kortrijk [Courtrai]–Utrecht 1639)
print attributed to **Jacob Matham** (1571 Haarlem–Haarlem 1631)
***Mountainous Landscape with a Pair of Lovers and a Sportsman,*** c. 1606
engraving on paper, 50.5 x 38.4 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**24. Roelandt Savery** (1576 Kortrijk [Courtrai]–Utrecht 1639)
***Six Wooded Landscapes,*** **n.d.**
etchings on paper, c. 9.2 x 12 cm (each)
Hearn Family Trust

25. Aegidius Sadeler II (1568 Antwerp–Prague 1629)
after Pieter Stevens [Petrus Stephani] (c. 1567 Mechelen–Prague, after 1624)
*Farmhouses on the Right of a River,* from *Eight Scenes in Bohemia,* c. 1610–15
etching on paper, 23 x 36.2 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**26. Aegidius Sadeler II** (1568 Antwerp–Prague 1629)
after **Pieter Stevens [Petrus Stephani]** (c. 1567 Mechelen–Prague, after 1624)
***A Forest with a Wooden Bridge,* from *Eight Scenes in Bohemia,*** c. 1610–15
etching on paper, 23.7 x 36.4 cm
Hearn Family Trust

27. **Hendrick Goltzius** (1558 Mühlbracht–Haarlem 1617)
upper left: ***Landscape with Couple and Shepherd,*** 1597–1600
upper right: ***Landscape with Farmhouse,*** 1597–1600
lower left: ***Landscape with a Waterfall and Mill,*** 1597–1600
lower right: ***Coastal Landscape,*** 1597–1600
chiaroscuro woodcuts from three blocks, on paper, c. 11.5 x 14.8 cm (each)
Hearn Family Trust

28. Pieter van der Borcht (c. 1535 Mechelen or Brussels–Antwerp 1608)
*Landscape with Two Riders*, n.d.
etching on paper, 33.5 x 48.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

AD PROVERBIA SALOMONIS. CAP VI. VERS VI
NOBILISS° ET INTEGER°. VIRO D. PAVLO HALMALIO. SENATORI ANTP. PATRONO MEO COLENDISSIMO D.D
HENRICUS HONDIUS

**29. Henricus Hondius** (1597 Amsterdam–Amsterdam 1651)
***Landscape with Peasants and Wagon,*** 1639
etching and engraving on paper, 47.9 x 40.3 cm
Hearn Family Trust

30. Abraham Bloemaert (1564 Gorinchem–Utrecht 1651)
*Tree with Cottage in Background*, n.d.
pen and brown ink and color washes over black chalk on paper, 22.5 x 17.1 cm
Hearn Family Trust

31. Abraham Rutgers (1632 Amsterdam–Amsterdam 1699)
*Skaters on the Vecht in Winter, with a Slanting Tree in the Foreground,* n.d.
black chalk, pen, brown and black ink, brown and gray wash on paper, 26.8 x 20.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

32. Allart van Everdingen (1621 Alkmaar–Amsterdam 1675)
*Landscape with Cottage by Riverbank*, n.d.
black ink washes, brushed over black chalk on laid paper, 10 x 14.3 cm
Hearn Family Trust

33. Barend (or Barnardus) Klotz (active 1670s)
*View toward Mechelen,* 1674
pen and ink with gray wash on paper, 13.5 x 19.9 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**34. Valentin Klotz** (1650 Maastricht–The Hague 1721)
***View of the Church on the Ring,*** 1672
pencil and wash on paper, 17.5 x 31 cm
Hearn Family Trust

35. Antoine Le Loup (1730 Spa–Spa 1802)
*Four Views of the Countryside near Spa,* 1772
pen and black ink on vellum, 12.5 x 12.5 cm (each)
private collection

**36. Eugène-Joseph Verboeckhoven** (1799 Comines-Warneton–Schaerbeek 1881)
***Mountainous Landscape with Bridge,*** n.d.
oil on paper, laid down on canvas, 57.2 x 46.4 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Whitney Collection, promised gift of Wheelock Whitney III, and purchase, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles S. McVeigh, by exchange, 2003.42.55

37. Jean-Michel Cels (1819 The Hague–Brussels 1894)
*Cloud Study*, c. 1838–42
oil on cardboard, 26.4 x 36.5 cm
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Thaw Collection, jointly owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Morgan Library & Museum, gift of Eugene V. Thaw, 2009.400.19

38. François Bossuet (1798 Ypres–Saint-Josse-ten-Noode 1889)
*Ostend. The Plain Viewed from the Top of the Dunes to the West*, n.d.
oil on canvas, 25.4 x 41.9 cm
Hearn Family Trust

39. Théodore Fourmois (1814 Presles–Ixelles 1871)
*La Hulpe*, 1865
oil on canvas, 48.9 x 61.3 cm
Hearn Family Trust

40. Théodore Fourmois (1814 Presles–Ixelles 1871)
*Landscape*, 1867
oil on canvas, 13.3 x 18 cm
Hearn Family Trust

41. Hippolyte Boulenger (1837 Tournai–Brussels 1874)
*Back on the Farm*, 1869
oil on canvas, 86.2 x 102.2 cm
Hearn Family Trust

42. Hippolyte Boulenger (1837 Tournai–Brussels 1874)
*Flood in the Ardennes*, n.d.
oil on canvas, 29.2 x 42 cm
Hearn Family Trust

43. Hippolyte Boulenger (1837 Tournai–Brussels 1874)
*Landscape with Haystacks*, n.d.
oil on canvas, 15.9 x 31.7 cm
Hearn Family Trust

44. Joseph-Théodore Coosemans (1828 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1904)
*Pond at the Castle of Robiano-Tervuren,* 1863
oil on canvas, 53.3 x 86.8 cm
Hearn Family Trust

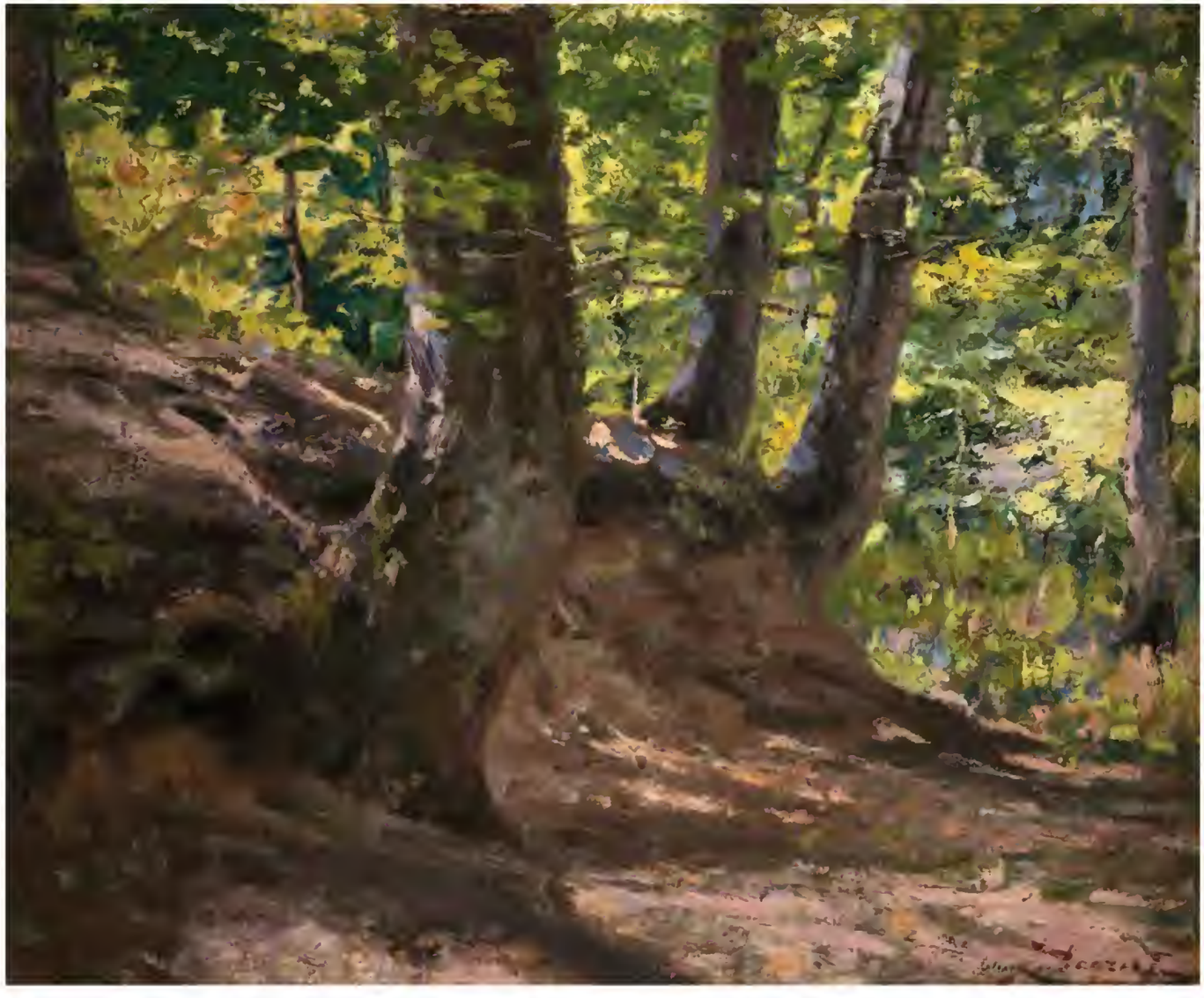
45. Joseph-Théodore Coosemans (1828 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1904)
*Landscape in the Countryside,* 1866
oil on canvas, 59.8 x 78 cm
Hearn Family Trust

46. Louis Crépin (1828 Fives–Etterbeek 1887)
*Le Marly, Edge of the Willebroeck Canal,* 1877
oil on canvas, 22.5 x 37.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

47. Louis Crépin (1828 Fives–Etterbeek 1887)
*Canal in Brussels,* 1878
oil on canvas, 35.6 x 26 cm
Hearn Family Trust

48. Joseph Quinaux (1822 Namur–Schaerbeek 1895)
*River*, 1886
oil on canvas, 34.9 x 51.4 cm
Hearn Family Trust

49. Louis Dubois (1830 Brussels–Brussels 1880)
*Dunes*, 1879
oil on panel, 20.3 x 27.9 cm
Hearn Family Trust



50. Jean-Baptiste Degreef (1852 Brussels–Auderghem 1894)
*Undergrowth*, n.d.
oil on canvas, 46 x 55.2 cm
Hearn Family Trust

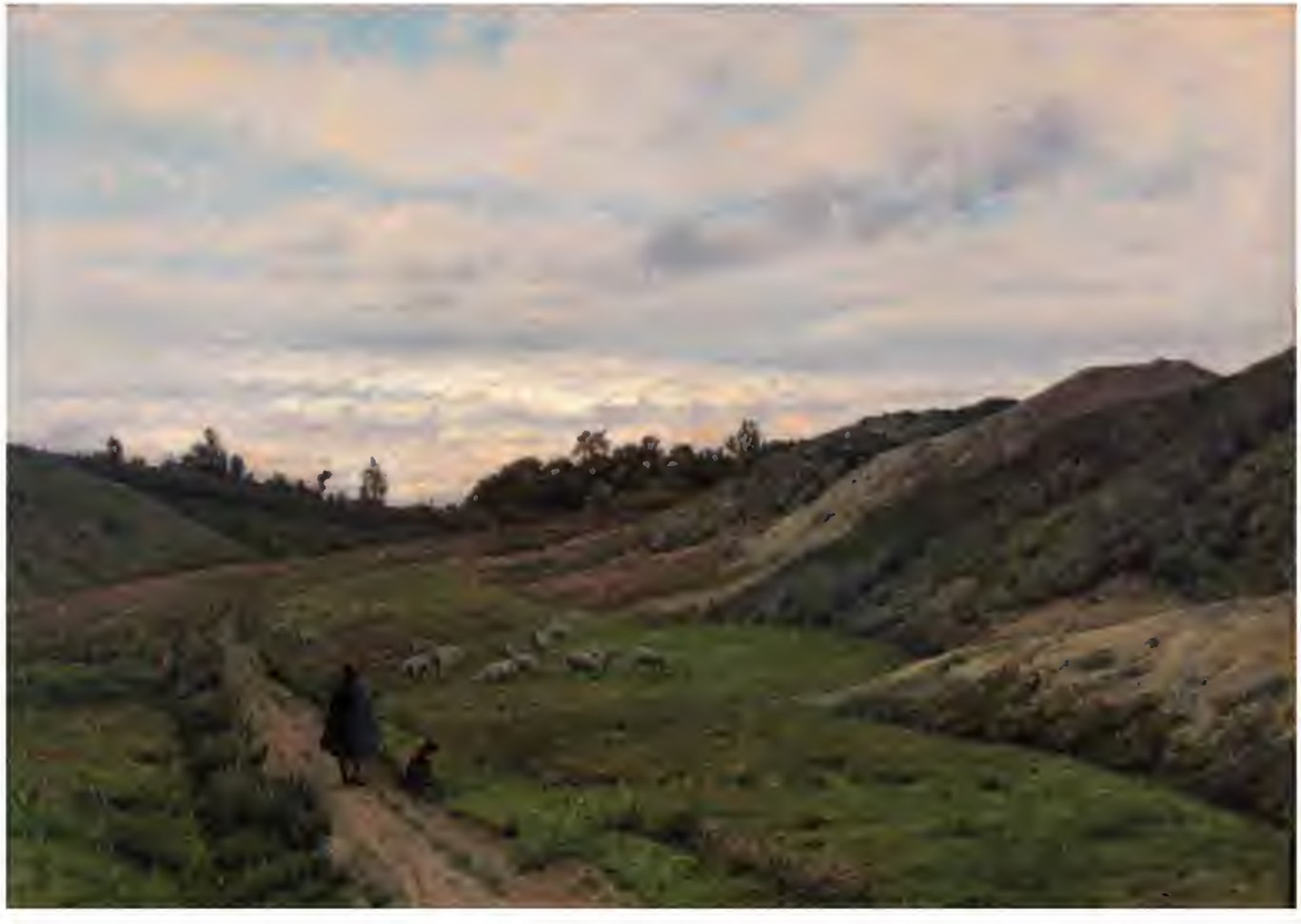
51. Jean-Baptiste Degreef (1852 Brussels–Auderghem 1894)
*View of the Scheldt*, n.d.
oil on canvas, 80.5 x 119.8 cm
Hearn Family Trust

52. Théodore T'Scharner (1826 Namur–Veurne [Furnes] 1906)
*Canal with Mill*, n.d.
oil on canvas, 33.6 x 54.3 cm
Hearn Family Trust

53. Théodore T'Scharner (1826 Namur–Veurne [Furnes] 1906)
*The Château d'Eysden*, n.d.
oil on canvas, 45.4 x 75.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

54. Théodore T'Scharner (1826 Namur–Veurne [Furnes] 1906)
*Landscape with Pond,* n.d.
oil on canvas, 45 x 75.2 cm
Hearn Family Trust

55. Théodore T'Scharner (1826 Namur–Veurne [Furnes] 1906)
*Ships*, n.d.
oil on canvas, 25.4 x 41.3 cm
Hearn Family Trust



56. Jean Pierre François Lamorinière (1828 Antwerp–Antwerp 1911)
*Landscape in Kempen with Shepherds and Sheep*, n.d.
oil on canvas, 62.9 x 85 cm
Hearn Family Trust

57. Jean Pierre François Lamorinière (1828 Antwerp–Antwerp 1911)
*Plain to Infinity*, 1895
oil on canvas, 30.4 x 48.7 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**58. Frans Binjé** (1835 Liège–Schaerbeek 1900)
***Landscape with Lock,*** n.d.
oil on canvas, 24.8 x 34.9 cm
Hearn Family Trust

59. Victor Uytterschaut (1847 Brussels–Boulogne-sur-Mer 1917)
*Pond in Winter*, n.d.
watercolor on Conté paper, 51.1 x 35.3 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**60. Camille Wauters** (1856 Temse [Tamise]–Lokeren 1919)
***Sunset,*** n.d.
oil on canvas, 24.8 x 35.1 cm
Hearn Family Trust

61. Frans van Kuyck (1852 Antwerp–Antwerp 1915)
*Marsh at Twilight*, n.d.
oil on canvas, 52.7 x 70.8 cm
Hearn Family Trust

62. Henri De Braekeleer (1840 Antwerp–Antwerp 1888)
*The Scheldt near Antwerp*, n.d.
oil on paper mounted on canvas, 14.3 x 27.9 cm
Hearn Family Trust

63. Isidore Meyers (1836 Buggenhout–Brussels 1917)
*At the Water's Edge*, n.d.
oil on panel, 19.4 x 29.8 cm
Hearn Family Trust

64. Frans van Leemputten (1850 Werchter–Antwerp 1914)
*Impressions on the Scheldt,* 1884
oil on canvas, 33.8 x 27.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

65. Théodore Verstraete (1850 Ghent–Antwerp 1907)
*The Vigil*, 1888
oil on canvas, 33 x 55 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**66. Alfred William Finch** (1854 Brussels–Helsinki 1930)
***Peasant Burning His Field,*** n.d.
oil on canvas, 30.8 x 51.1 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**67. Alfred William Finch** (1854 Brussels–Helsinki 1930)
upper left: ***Harvest,*** 1888 (14.8 x 21.5 cm)
upper right: ***Fields in Belgium,*** c. 1888 (9.7 x 16.5 cm)
lower left: ***Study of Orchard,*** 1890 (12 x 16.3 cm)
lower right: ***Battersea Bridge,*** 1892 (16.8 x 20 cm)
etchings with drypoint on paper
Hearn Family Trust

**68. Georges Le Brun** (1873 Verviers–Stuivekenskerke 1914)
***A Conversation,*** c. 1899
charcoal and pencil on paper, 53 x 68 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**69. Charles Mertens** (1865 Antwerp–Calverley 1919)
***Oyster Park in Zeeland,*** n.d.
oil on cardboard, 34.9 x 52.4 cm
Hearn Family Trust

70. François Maréchal (1864 Housse–Liège 1940)
*Valley of the Meuse,* 1892
softground etching on vellum paper, 17.3 x 30.2 cm
Collection of Sura Levine

71. Constantin Meunier (1831 Etterbeek–Brussels 1905)
sketch for *The Red Roofs of Pâturages*, after 1885
oil on canvas, 35 x 51 cm
Collection of Sura Levine

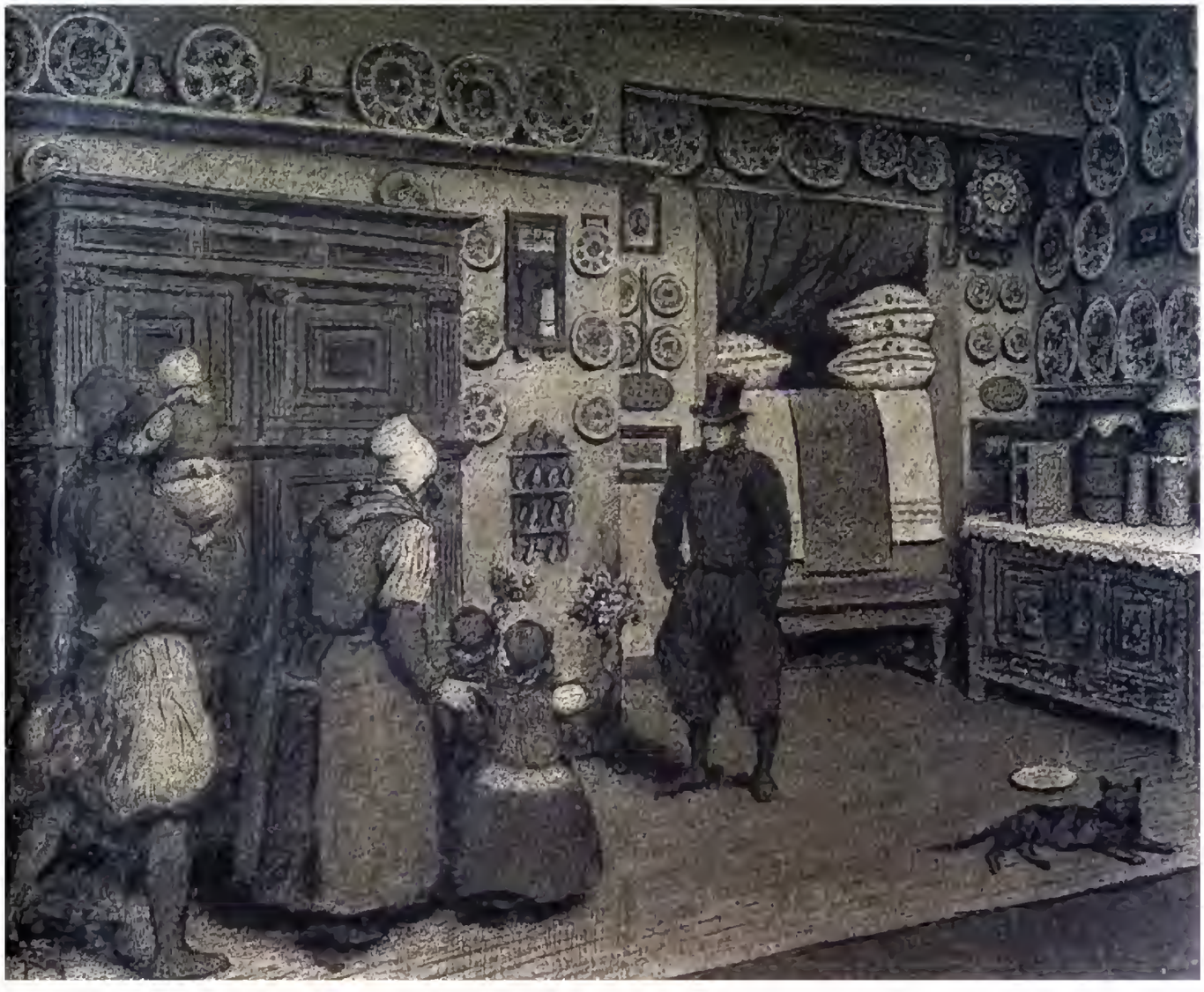
72. Constantin Meunier (1831 Etterbeek–Brussels 1905)
*Hiercheuse Climbing a Heap of Coal,* after 1885
pencil and charcoal on paper, 20.3 x 15.9 cm
Collection of Sura Levine

73. Eugène Laermans (1864 Sint-Jans-Molenbeek–Brussels 1940)
*The Emigrants*, n.d.
etching on paper, 12.1 x 10.2 cm
Collection of Sura Levine

74. Georges Lemmen (1865 Schaerbeek–Brussels 1916)
*Thames Scene, the Elevator,* c. 1890
oil on canvas, 61.6 x 85.1 cm
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, anonymous gift, 57.166

**75. Xavier Mellery** (1845 Laeken–Brussels 1921)
***Village Scene, Marken,*** c. 1879
pen, ink, and watercolor on paper, 55.2 x 43.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**76. Xavier Mellery** (1845 Laeken–Brussels 1921)
*Village Scene, Marken,* c. 1879
charcoal, pencil, and ink on paper, 10 x 12 cm
Hearn Family Trust



77. **Xavier Mellery** (1845 Laeken–Brussels 1921)
*Village Scene, Marken: Visit from the Preacher,* c. 1879
charcoal, pencil, and ink on paper, 25 x 34.9 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**78. Xavier Mellery** (1845 Laeken–Brussels 1921)
*Two Beguines, Bruges,* n.d.
charcoal, pencil, and ink on paper, 23.2 x 29.2 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**79. Xavier Mellery** (1845 Laeken–Brussels 1921)
***Woman in Chapel near Carved Choir Stalls,*** n.d.
Conté crayon and colored pencil on paper, 58.5 x 80 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**80. James Ensor** (1860 Ostend–Ostend 1949)
*Cataclysms*, 1888
etching on paper, 18 x 23.7 cm
Collection of Rachel Solman Viola

**81. Léon Frederic** (1856 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1940)
*Child with Landscape,* c. 1890
oil on canvas, 32 x 26.7 cm
Hearn Family Trust

82. Léon Frederic (1856 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1940)
*The Old Man Blessing,* 1889
oil on canvas, 59.5 x 59 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**83. Léon Frederic** (1856 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1940)
***Walloon Landscape,*** n.d.
oil on canvas mounted on panel, 18 x 26 cm
Hearn Family Trust

84. Léon Frederic (1856 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1940)
*Landscape under a Menacing Sky*, n.d.
oil on canvas mounted on panel, 16.9 x 20.3 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**85. Léon Frederic** (1856 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1940)
***Valley at Nafraiture,*** n.d.
oil on canvas mounted on panel, 20 x 30 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**86. Léon Frederic** (1856 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1940)
*Spring*, 1883
oil on canvas, 22.2 x 47.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**87. Léon Frederic** (1856 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1940)
***Winter,*** 1883
oil on canvas, 22.2 x 47.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

88. Léon Frederic (1856 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1940)
*Dunes at Heist*, 1905
oil on canvas on hardboard, 33 x 41.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**89. Léon Frederic** (1856 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1940)
***Dunes at Heist,*** 1905
oil on canvas on hardboard, 30 x 38 cm
Hearn Family Trust

90. Léon Frederic (1856 Brussels–Schaerbeek 1940)
*Grainstack at Nafraiture, Ardennes,* n.d.
oil on canvas on hardboard, 32.7 x 48.3 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**91. Jan Toorop** (1858 Purworejo Regency–The Hague 1928)
***Village of Machelen,*** c. 1884
oil on cardboard mounted on panel, 27.3 x 36.2 cm
Hearn Family Trust

92. William Degouve de Nuncques (1867 Monthermé–Stavelot 1935)
*Canal, Bruges,* 1889
pastel on paper, 19.1 x 26.7 cm
Hearn Family Trust

93. William Degouve de Nuncques (1867 Monthermé–Stavelot 1935)
*The Servants of Death (Nocturne)*, c. 1897
pastel on wove paper, 48 x 94.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**94. William Degouve de Nuncques** (1867 Monthermé–Stavelot 1935)
***The Shepherd,*** 1890
pastel and pencil on paper, 62.9 x 47.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

95. William Degouve de Nuncques (1867 Monthermé–Stavelot 1935)
*Barge on a Canal,* 1906
oil on canvas, 29.8 x 51.1 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**96. William Degouve de Nuncques** (1867 Monthermé–Stavelot 1935)
***Brouwersgracht, Amsterdam,*** 1917
colored chalk on paper, 73 x 60.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

97. William Degouve de Nuncques (1867 Monthermé–Stavelot 1935)
*Summer, Ardennes,* 1925
oil on canvas, 90 x 116 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**98. Fernand Khnopff** (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
***At Fosset. The Water Rises,*** 1881
oil on canvas mounted on panel, 12 x 21.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**99. Fernand Khnopff** (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
***At Fosset. The Village,*** 1883
oil on panel, 14.3 x 21.9 cm
Hearn Family Trust

100. Fernand Khnopff (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
*At Fosset. The Hamlet,* 1882
oil on canvas mounted on panel, 12.4 x 18 cm
Hearn Family Trust

101. Fernand Khnopff (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
*At Fosset. In the Rain,* 1890
oil on panel, 19.2 x 23.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

102. Fernand Khnopff (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
*At Fosset. An Evening,* 1886
oil on canvas, 40 x 58.1 cm
Hearn Family Trust

103. Fernand Khnopff (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
*The End of the Day (Pond at Menil)*, 1891
pastel on paper, 34.3 x 44.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**104. Fernand Khnopff** (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
***Landscape in Fosset,*** c. 1890–95
oil on canvas mounted on panel, 18.7 x 23.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

105. Fernand Khnopff (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
*The Bridge at Fosset,* 1897
oil on canvas, 45 x 66.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**106. Fernand Khnopff** (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
***With Grégoire Le Roy. My Heart Weeps for Days of Yore,*** 1889
graphite, chalk, and colored pencil on paper, 25 x 14.3 cm
Hearn Family Trust

107. Fernand Khnopff (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
*With Grégoire Le Roy. My Heart Weeps for Days of Yore,* 1889
black pencil, chalk, and colored pencil on paper, 23.2 x 14 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**108. Fernand Khnopff** (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
***With Georges Rodenbach. A Dead City,*** 1889
pencil, pastel, and ink on paper, 25.7 x 16.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

109. Fernand Khnopff (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
*Memory of Bruges. Entrance to the Beguinage,* 1904
pastel and black chalk on paper, 27 x 43.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

110. Fernand Khnopff (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
*Memory of Flanders. A Canal,* 1904
graphite, charcoal, and pastel on paper, 25 x 41.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

111. Fernand Khnopff (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
*In Bruges. A Portal*, c. 1904
graphite and pastel on paper, 28 x 43 cm
Hearn Family Trust

112. Fernand Khnopff (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
*In Bruges. The Minnewater,* 1904–05
black chalk, graphite, and pastel on paper, 47 x 101.9 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**113. Fernand Khnopff** (1858 Grembergen-lez-Termonde–Brussels 1921)
***The Shrimp Fisherman,*** c. 1912
colored pencil and pastel on paper, 22.9 x 29.2 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**114. George Minne** (1866 Ghent–Sint-Martens-Latem 1941)
**original drawing for *Serres chaudes* by Maurice Maeterlinck,** 1889
ink, white body color, and pencil on paper, 35.6 x 25.7 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**115. George Minne** (1866 Ghent–Sint-Martens-Latem 1941)
**illustration for *La Princesse Maleine* by Maurice Maeterlinck,** 1889
heliogravure on paper, 18.5 x 13.5 cm
private collection

**116. Charles Doudelet** (1861 Lille–Ghent 1938)
***Italian Landscape,*** n.d.
chinese ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper, 17.8 x 23.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

117. Léon Spilliaert (1881 Ostend–Brussels 1946)
*Bird of Prey*, 1902
pencil, india ink, brush, pen, and colored crayon on paper, 37.1 x 25.4 cm
Hearn Family Trust

**118. Léon Spilliaert** (1881 Ostend–Brussels 1946)
***Maeterlinck Théâtre,*** 1902–03
india ink, wash, brush, pencil, gouache, and brown ink on paper, 15.2 x 24.1 cm
Hearn Family Trust

119. Léon Spilliaert (1881 Ostend–Brussels 1946)
*Hofstraat in Ostend,* 1908
chinese ink and colored pencil on paper, 71 x 55.6 cm
Hearn Family Trust

120. Léon Spilliaert (1881 Ostend–Brussels 1946)
*Scene of War,* 1917
india ink, brush, and watercolor on paper, 47 x 35 cm
Collection of Jean and Howard LeVaux

121. Léon Spilliaert (1881 Ostend–Brussels 1946)
*The Rock*, 1917–19
Conté crayon on paper, 27.6 x 45.4 cm
Hearn Family Trust

122. Léon Spilliaert (1881 Ostend–Brussels 1946)
*Fishing Port, Ostend,* 1923
chinese ink wash, pencil, watercolor, gouache, and colored pencil on paper, 49.2 x 64.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

123. Léon Spilliaert (1881 Ostend–Brussels 1946)
*Trunks of Beech Trees in Spring,* 1945
watercolor, gouache, and india ink on paper, 61 x 44.5 cm
Hearn Family Trust

# CONTRIBUTORS

Anne Adriaens-Pannier is president of the Jenny & Luc Peire Foundation, Knokke, artistic director of the Léon Spilliaert House, Ostend, and president of the Jos Knaepen Fund, King Baudouin Foundation, Brussels. Formerly, Adriaens-Pannier was the curator of the works on paper collection at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels from 1974 to 2011, in 2003 becoming head of the Department of Scientific Services. At the RMFAB, she curated the following exhibitions: *Spilliaert* (2006); *Alechinsky* (2007); *Lismonde* (2008–09); *CoBrA 1949–1951* (2008–09); *Mendelson* (2010); *Line and Colour in Drawing* (2010–11); and *Leblanc* (2011).

Albert Alhadeff received his PhD from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University in 1972 with H. W. Janson advising his thesis on the sculpture and drawings of George Minne. During the course of his research on the then little-known artist, Alhadeff discovered a trove of several hundred drawings still in the possession of Minne's family, which were subsequently purchased by the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent. Alhadeff has published many articles on Minne and plans to author a book on the artist.

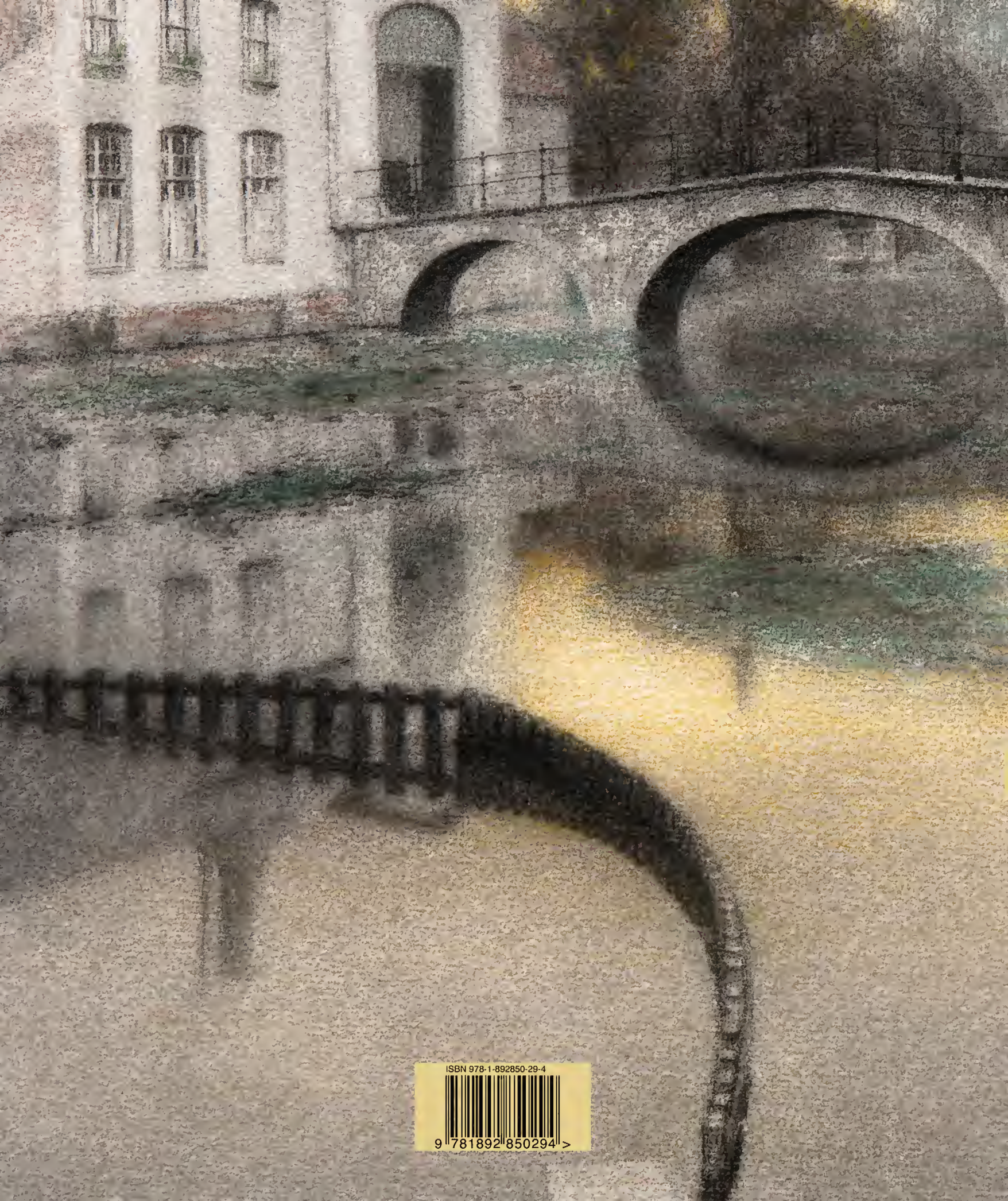
Alison Hokanson is assistant curator for nineteenth-century European painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She holds a BA in art history from Brown University and an MA and PhD from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, where she was an Erwin Panofsky Fellow. Her dissertation investigated the interior scenes of the Belgian realist painter Henri De Braekeleer. More recently, she has curated exhibitions on the seascapes of Joseph Mallord William Turner, Pre-Raphaelite art and design, and collecting in the Gilded Age. Her current research explores the symbolist movement in France and Central Europe circa 1900.

Jeffery Howe is professor of fine arts at Boston College, specializing in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European art as well as American architecture. His publications include: *The Symbolist Art of Fernand Khnopff* (1982), *The Houses We Live In: An Identification Guide to the History and Style of American Domestic Architecture* (2002), and *Houses of Worship: An Identification Guide to the History and Styles of American Religious Architecture* (2003). He has curated and edited the catalogues of numerous exhibitions for the McMullen Museum: *Edvard Munch: Psyche, Symbol and Expression* (2001); *Fernand Khnopff: Inner Visions and Landscapes* (2004); *A New Key: Modern Belgian Art from the Simon Collection* (2007); *Courbet: Mapping Realism; Paintings from the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and American Collections* (2013); and *John La Farge and the Recovery of the Sacred* (2015).

Catherine Labio is associate professor of English at the University of Colorado Boulder. Labio is the author of *Origins and the Enlightenment: Aesthetic Epistemology from Descartes to Kant* (2004) and a wide range of articles on

literature, intellectual history, and visual culture. She edited *Belgian Memories* (2002) and co-edited *The Great Mirror of Folly: Finance, Culture, and the Crash of 1720* (2013). She curated the exhibition *From Bande Dessinée to Artist's Book: Testing the Limits of Franco-Belgian Comics* (2013) and co-curated *Hockney and Hogarth: Selections from the CU Art Museum's Collection of British Art* (2012). Labio is currently working on two monographs: *The Year of Wonder and Despair: France and the Mississippi Bubble of 1719–1720* and *The Architecture of Comics*.

Dominique Marechal, formerly a curator at the Groeningemuseum in Bruges, has been curator of nineteenth-century paintings at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium in Brussels since 1999. He has edited or contributed to the following exhibition catalogues: *Frank Brangwyn* (1987); *Bruges and the Art of Silversmiths* (1993); *Hans Memling* (1994); *Bruges and the Renaissance: Memling to Pourbus* (1998); the McMullen Museum's *Fernand Khnopff: Inner Visions and Landscapes* (2004) and *Courbet: Mapping Realism; Paintings from the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and American Collections* (2013); *Romanticism in Belgium* (2005); *Joseph Suvée* (2007); *Alfred Stevens* (2009); and *Gustave Courbet and Belgium* (2013). Marechal has also written on Belgian nineteenth-century painting and on neoclassical art in and from Bruges.



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